Table of Contents

1. READ THIS (please.)
2. 1. The End and The New.
3. 2. Purpose.
4. 3. An Eagle and A Sleeping Tiger.
5. 4. Unprecedented Results.
6. 5. Lonely Memory.
7. 6. Repeatance.
8. 7. A Painting of Secrecy.
9. 8. Family.
10. 9. Taken for Granted.
11. 10. Rising Struggles
12. 11. See Right Through Me.
13. 12. A Brother's Lament.
14. 13. Philip's Torment.
15. 14. A Curse or a Punishment?
16. 15. Fear and Realization
17. 16. The Secluded Past
18. 17. The Overdue Payment
19. 18. What I want...

READ THIS (please.)

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[image]

And we're here....

To the point that I want to discontinue this but...

Since I got little notifications of impressions earlier this months and weeks, I'll continue in another plot...

So if you're wondering about the chapters present and the things you've read before this.

What chapters?

I'm organizing the plot... Because there was no character development in the present plot and sooo...

My promise is still there...

About the ships... Yes I'm still an addict to the Nortial ship... don't judge me.

CPP, NPA, NDF and Anti Terror Law is still here, I'll just add some arrangements in their characters

And, I'll update the chapters as quickly as I update my other book, ASEAN empire and that is... once a month?

I update when I feel like it and when I have a decent idea to the chapter.

And another reason is why I deleted the chapters is because I lost the main idea and somehow I got another to fit and fill this plot.

And I am dying with school that's why I update that long.

Anyway, since we're here already, I just want to thank everyone

who supported the recent story and I hope you find the new plot good...

Well, Since I'll have to find time to update this book, I suggest to go read other underrated books like these in which I just recently found;

Please support these books as well as their authors, They are great writers, My honest opinion!

Well since it this part...

Please also read my other story too...

It's just a suggestion for you to read... I'll sum its summary...

Its about the philippine family before, during and after colonization period but I'll focus more on the martial law period because that is what the plot is about...

Thank you for reading and we'll all be seeing each other in the new plot!

BYE!

Author out!✧

1. The End and The New.

Staring at the endless dark see, A smoke from my breath came from my mouth as the cold breeze pass by every minute. Holding a scarf

close to my face, The wind blew quite vigorously in this dark morning.

"Martial..."

Turning my head, I saw the now exiled great president of my country, having the wrinkles and weary look on his stern face...

"President Marcos... What have I, to be granted of your presence?"

Marcos could only smile, Stopping in his tracks to stand beside me, as we both look at the clouded and drak sea in front of us.

"Martial, After this, Me and my family are going to be transported to Hawaii..."

Glancing at the once fearless dictator, such as me, the cold wind softened...

"Is that so..."

"I have been branded as an outcast now. Just as you were, Martial."

He stated, Still with his sad smile as he face the ocean or to say the direction to the Philippines...

Humming in response, I put my hands inside my pockets and clenched them...

"I am telling you this for an order, rather, a request..."

He faced me, though as I was a country, I was more taller than him...

Taking out an object from his vest, He reached out his hand to me and gave me an old key

"What is-"

"This is a key to a hidden villa in Nueva Ecija, Come back to the Philippines and live there. A small device inside this key would determine the location of the villa, I am giving this to you for our

long friendship."

His expression softened as he look at me, not as his general or soldier but rather a fellow mate.

"This is too much- I wouldn't possibly come back to where thousands of my innocent men were killed..."

"Martial."

He called my name with authority in his voice.

"Here, In Guam, We have each other as friends, I have you and my family... but once we part, You'll part alone."

Marcos explained

"With your background and story, normal logic wouldn't and can't explain the things you have been through. But, as someone who has been on your side for merely 21 years in my reign as president of the Philippines, this is the least I could do for someone who has been fighting for our country since the start of history."

Glancing at the key, I couldn't help but be weary

"How about you and your family?"

I questioned, sounding as if they were also my family, In some sense, they have become a part of me also.

"Do not be worried for us, Martial... Go back to where your real family lies, They are the only ones who would be with you when we are gone."

"This isn't right- I am coming with you-"

I forced yet Marcos stopped me again...

"If you come with us, You would be miserable even more. As our human lives are nothing compared to you... I would not let you see another of yours die infront of your very eyes any longer."

I felt beads of water fall to my cheeks and down to my chin as I look at him.

"This is rare. This would be my first and last time to see you cry like this, Martial, But I guess its worth every moment."

Raising his hand, Marcos aligned his arm to my arm, with his hand opened for a handshake. I took it with a smile after wiping the tears on my face.

"As the 10th president of the Republic of the Philippines, I hereby relieve, Martial 'Maharlika' Law, from his allegiance to the 4th Philippine Republic."

We both shook our hands, After releasing our grips... I found myself empty and lonely again.

Parting ways with the last, who understood me, Completely drowned me after I watched them get on a plane heading to Hawaii. Marcos caught I glimpse of me staring yet he smiled and waved goodbye, wording in his mouth...

'Try to find happiness where the sorrow began.'

As the plane, rose up to the skies and gradually disappearing to the clouds... everyone dispersed as well as I... who was scheduled to go back to the new constitution of the Philippines secretly.

Declining any sort of transportation, I went to an edge of a cliff watching as the waves turn high like spikes of rocks changing in every minute. Closing my eyes, I let my weight take over and fall over the high cliff to the raging sea...

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.

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"Papa!~ Papa!~ Wake up~"

Feeling as if the world was going on an earthquake, I slowly opened

my eyes to four pair of curious yellow orbs, staring directly at me...

"Yes, you two?"

"Yay!! Papa is awake!"

Groaning as I stood up from where I lay, under the shade of a tree, Two red heads like me yet a boy and girl, had their arms raised with their joyful expressions

"Is there a particular reason you two woke me up?"

Glancing at the two, more exactly twins, I ruffled my crimson hair and yawned silently...

"We were bored, Papa!"

"Kuya NDF, CPP and Ate NPA is boring!~~"

The two of them nodded in agreement.

"Tell me, Bill, Terrie... if both of you weren't fun to be with, would your brothers and sister would still be there waiting for you two to play with them?"

I pointed at three figures at the distance, who was having a gloomy picnic, Bill and Terrie looked at each other then to me before hurriedly running back to the three in the distance with innocent tears on their faces.

Humming in Relief, I watched them all from afar...

'I should've died earlier than this....'

Looking to the distance, Seeing three teens and two small children playing without any worries, I faintly smiled...

'Just for this once.... I'll for their sake.'

A Decade ago, Marcos relieved me from my duties from his constitution and let me live in one of his hidden homes, yet what

was surprising was the house itself... It was My Uncle Llanera's house yet It looked like Marcos renovated it for the modern times, making it easier for me to live in.

On the years that I've lived inside the lonely and dark house, I found myslef drowning in misery and depression, almost losing everything I ought to live by...

In my supposed day of suicide, I was walking on the dark streets of Manila when I found a human laying on the ground...

"Hey, Are you alright?"

When I turned the body, It was bloody and full of gunshot wounds, It was a horrifying scene as the human was a woman wearing a goverment ID.

Walking pass the unknown deceased, I heard cries from the nearest alley... as I went to check it, A more horrifying scene welcomed itself to my eyes...

Several men with guns, slaughtered mercilessly in one alley, It was like hell when I came walking through the bloody alley yet what interested me the most was the cries within the alley. Stopping in my tracks, I could feel a presence of country spirit flowing in the air...

Alerted, I made sure to use mine as well, that made my hidden black wings appear.... Sneakily getting to the source of the country spirit flowing in the air, I found only a bundle of cloths on a cold stone, in this dirty place.

Sighing and thinking It was a waste of time, I checked the cloths in which where the country spirit was coming from... Upon untangling the cloths, I froze in place.

"Why is there two children with this much country spirit?"

To be more presice, Twins with country spirit yet they had no proper flag, Only a red hair and flag...

Seeing their both their arms, I saw letters like a tatoo...

"Anti Terror... Law?"

I read the girl's tatoo then I turned to the boy...

"Anti... Terror Bill- What is this bullshit."

As far as the world knows, I was the only one who was a law and country at the same time yet now I am facing two more a Bill and a Law... Two undetermined children abandoned here with the stench of blood everywhere...

Glancing to the side, i saw a man holding in what seemed to be the order this men were given... Picking it up and reading it even though It is soaked in blood

My eyes widened in shock as I clenched the paper, unconsiously making it burn with my country spirit.

Kill the Anti Terror Children. They are a threat to the goverment and the Filipinos.

"What the Hell— Killing two innocent children is not enough for you Bastards, huh?"

I used my country spirit again to make the twins fall asleep as I carry them in my arms... Glancing at the slaughtered men, I cleaned them up like dust when I used power then walking away from that once bloody alley then I came across the dead woman again.

Glancing at the woman, I placed the twins on my one of my wings, making it a cradle, as I took out my phone and dialed the police before leaving the place for good...

Bill and Terrie are currently 10 year old children, happily living their lives like normal children... at least you could say that...

They have a tendency to play with grenades, knives and guns sometimes, but I would take the dangerous weapons before they could kill someone... You might think that its dangerous for me to raise a kid.

Well... I raised the three communists of the Philippines that are a perfect threat to the whole goverment, so, yes... I have perfect background when it comes to kids like them.

None of them are biologically connected to me... All of them are adopted.

Why did I decide to adopt them? Simple... I was trying to give life to an outcast, who only thought of dying as the only option to be free.

As I, myself, lived a life with that reasoning.

"Dad!!! Stop Bill before he stabs me to death!"

NDF jokingly screamed in agony, as to being chased by Bill with a toy knife.

"Kuya, Bakit mo kinain yung pandesal ko?!"

(Kuya, Why did you eat my pandesal?!)

NDF could only laugh, as he was still being chased. NPA was having a steady tea party with Terrir, In which I will assume would turn into a bloody murder later...

Sighing, I faintly smiled... As the wind blows carrying the peaceful atmosphere and the giggles of the young ones in the distance. Then a sudden appearance of a small fluff ball of different shades of brown laid its head on one of my legs...

Putting my hand onto its Fluffy brown fur, I glanced down to the small thing....

"Hello, Eru..."

I carressed the small animal, or so to say, dog...

Responding with a low growl, I could see its tail waging from left to right secretly. Giggling, I turned my head to the children yet I saw nothing but the objects they were using earlier.

At the sudden disappearance, I panicked as I lean forward while sitting down...

'Where—'

I looked around, clearly worried and panicking. Picking up Eru and hugging it close as a stress reliever, I stood up, walking around with furrowed eyebrows and a worried expression.

'I swear—If I find these brats, I'm going to murder them for worrying me this much.'

As I got closer to the door, leading inside, I heard the television was on and with a loud volume... Entering, I saw the children all together yet all of them were focused on the program in the tv, I too, became focused...

"After the Revolution of 1976, Also known as the EDSA or People Power Revolution, The Philippines was released from the dictatorship of Former President Ferdinand Marcos gaining our freedom today."

Videos and Pictures of Me and Marcos was flashed on the screen, Making me frown and irritated yet I continued watching...

"Together with the celebration of our Celebration of the successful revolution, Our Honorable President and Beloved Country, Has publicly announced a nationwide celebration and dedication to those who lost their lives during the marcos regime!"

Then Philip, My younger sibling other than Philia, who was the Philippine country representative, Showed on a video, smiling happily than before... Before... Everything else happened.

"It is with Great privilage, To announce a week long celebration for the Filipinos that lost their lives in the regime that Marcos and Martial Law reigned in. Furthermore, In Addition with the sacrifice Martial Law has poured onto the Independence of this country during the historical wars, We have decided to honor his countless deeds."

He continued....

"As a Decade ago, We recieved news that my brother didn't came with Marcos to Hawaii... After every failed search of the late war general, It is with great sadness that he was announced dead personally by the UN and ASEAN..."

Yes, After not coming out to the public, even contacting or visiting my siblings, My missing case was put to rest because they couldn't find any clue or evidence on where I was, That's why, after years of searching around the country and the world, The UN, ASEAN and the Philippine government gave up. My case ran for Years unlike normal cases that after 6 months of being missing they would be considered dead after the said time.

"Therefore, In honor of our fallen countrymen and great heroes, It is in my honor to say; God Bless and Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!"

(God Bless and Long Live Philippines!)

As the Program goes to commercials, My Children noticed and slowly turned their heads to my direction.... With a worried expression, CPP started...

"Dad... Are you alright?"

As I see them all hesitating to say their words, I simply smiled, walked and sat on the couch...

"Yes, why shouldn't I?"

"You clearly said to us... That you don't want to remember *'those'* days..."

They all came to sit on the empty couches with worried faces towards me.

"It's alright— They don't even know I am still alive and here with you. So it's natural that they will mention *'those'* days..."

"But Papa! You're going to have an head ache later because of that!"

Terrie innocently stated...

I sighed in relief and only crossed my legs, Giving a soft expression, totally opposite from my old expression, in which were strict, Stern and always glaring...

"It's Alright... I can handle little things like that."

"No— This is a serious matter, Dad! We all know what you're going to do if you are alone."

NDF bursted... standing up in anger as he clench his fist and grit his teeth...

"Something that small, Can't kill someone like me..."

"CPP, NPA... Call Headquarters- Say that we are spending the night with someone suicidal."

With those words, I didn't flinch nor show any different emotion yet I saw the twins, CPP and NPA widen their eyes towards their older brother.

"Kuya!"

Every single one of them shouted at NDF, who wasn't listening but looking directly at me with worried and sad eyes

"Suicide is a strong word, Son..."

I stood up and started walking away to another hallway...

"Dad! Come back here!"

NDF Shouted, to which echoed...

As I was walking, I was suddenly stopped in my tracks when I felt something heavy on my legs

Glancing down I saw Bill and Terrie with tears on their eyes, while being koalas on my legs. Sighing I tried to gently remove their grips...

"Bill, Terrie... Let go of Papa..."

"Noo~! Papa will bleed again!"

Bill cried out, tightening his grip on my pants...

Then another heaviness weight on my back, Turning my head I saw NPA with furrowed brows...

"You're not going anywhere!"

She Clinged on my back, making me even harder to walk...

Then two more weights added... CPP and NDF hugging me and NPA from the back

"You five— Alright, Alright! Let go, I feel like my back's going to break!"

They didn't budge... Instead they drag me with them to the living room, again...

Sighing as they let me sit on the long couch and they all sat beside me, locking my way of exit. Bill leaned his back on my body on my left while on my right was NPA hugging my arm while scrolling down her phone and Terrie was still on my leg, clinging on to my pants like a koala...

' Sigh... Being a single parent with this many children feels like... ***Favoritism.*** *'*

My train of thoughts continued...

' Adopting them was easy— Disowning them... Wait, Didn't they disown me during the EDSA revolution? '

Unknowingly, I let my country spirit leak out, causing the bright atmosphere to darken with my power as it was more of like black mist or fog.

"D-Dad- Y-Your Country spirit is c-coming out-"

"Ah yes, I Let it be that way... as I remember, **some**, parts of the revolution including you three, ***repectively***."

I saw the three flinch, Scurrying away from my seat... As I stare at them with a smile. Seeing their frightened faces while getting away to the end of the long couch, Makes me want to tease them even more...

"I-I thought w-we were cool about that- NDF!? didn't you talk to dad about that!?"

CPP screeched, Holding the collar of his older brother as I got closer...

"I didn't! I though dad already forgot!"

"Well, does it look like Dad forgot about that shit!?"

The three screeched like there was no tomorrow when my shadow casted over them.

"So~ Which one of you planned that very... betrayal?~"

I could see their souls flying out of their mouths as they went pale...

I could only flick their foreheads... I've gone soft on these brats...

They all looked at me with widened eyes, one of them covering their forehead

"Betrayal is good for someone who doesn't have a good morality. I didn't raise you to be that way."

I chuckled at their cute reactions until suddenly—

BOOM!

Hearing Eru growl in defense, The twins hugging each other and the three going on defensive positions, I walked outside ordering the children to stay inside even though, the house itself was covered and protected with my country spirit.

With Eru by my side...

"Eru... Go fetch."

With no movement that occured... Eru disappeared as growling and aggressive barking could be heard going into the forest...

Truly, Eru isn't your typical pet or dog... He was experimented on and was rescued in illegal smuggling, All the other ones he was with died within a day, he was the only one that survived. Eru never did recover from being experimented but this made him unique.

Having become a killing machine and couldn't be contained in any facility, Eru's responsibility dropped to me... To which, I tamed this creature in a week...

As I glance up, Smoke filled the air of the direction Eru ran to...

"What was that?!"

Turning my head, I saw CPP running towards me with the rest behind him

"Stay here and gaurd your siblings!"

I ordered as I ran to the smoke's direction... As I got closer, I started coughing with the smoke coming my way but then I saw Eru pulling out a cloth from... A crashed military helicopter.

Coughing from the smoke while covering my eyes as fire from the crashed transportaion arise each second. I came to Eru's side to see men in uniforms crushed and bleeding, Life was already spilling out of them yet the animal ran inside the firey object.

"Eru-"

The fire arose again infront of me, as I got away a few... I tried spotting Eru but to no avail... I had at least 2 minutes to get Eru and me out of here before the heli explodes with its spilling gas and arising fire.

"Eru, Where are you?!"

"Bark! Bark! Bark!"

With a familiar bark coming from the heli, I came closer in a hurry to see Eru pulling a green sleeve with a... blue hand...?

Nevertheless, He was the only one Eru sensed was alive... I pulled them both out, wrapping the person's arm behind my neck and carrying him out of there just before the heli exploded.

"Dad! What Ha-"

"Don't ask questions and prepare the medical Kit! Now!"

Entering the house, I gently placed the person on the couch, Only to see they were full of scars and blood...

NPA came running with the medical kit. Rummaging through it, I took the alchohol and bandages... Furrowing my eyes, I glanced to one of the teens.

"Give me one of your hand knives."

Reaching out my opened hand, I readied the bandage...

"Now!"

They stumbled their hands upon giving me a small knife but we managed to save this one....

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Groaning upon waking up, The person cleared his eyesight from the sudden light entering the room.

Feeling that the place was unfamiliar, He slightly panicked and looked like he was looking for something... When Suddenly the door opened.

"Ah, You're awake."

Alarmed, He glared at Martial, who came in with a tray of water and towel hanging from it.

"Who are you?"

He spoke quite harshly, with an accent...

"No need to be cautious..."

Martial continued as he sat on a chair after taking it from below the desk

"If I wanted to kill you, I would've left you in that crash site."

No response as expected, Martial expected much.

"Where am I-?"

"Glad you asked... You are in my home in Nueva Ecija."

Martial saw the person rather man tilted his head slightly.

"To be more specific, In one of the Philippine Provinces... Now may I ask a question... Sir North Korea?"

Alarmed, North Korea grabbed Martial's collars though the pain from his wounds stopped him from gripping Martial's neck.

"Who the f*ck are you- And what do you want from me."

Humming in response, Martial let out a sigh.

"I Would've chained and caged you instead of treating and letting you here free."

"Can you now...?"

Another voice entered the room...

"I can do it to you now, Unless you don't want to have any broken bone anywhere on your body."

NDF slowly and silently backed away, and closed the door.

"I apologize for my eldest, He and his siblings are too much of free spirits."

"I see..."

Glancing towards Martial, North couldn't help but wonder and say...

"Aren't you the country representative of this nation? And how did you even know my name?"

"Still as suspicious, hmm?"

Martial continued, Crossing his legas and smiling.

"I am not the country representative of the Philippines... I may have been in the 19's but everything changed."

Raising a brow, North was still suspicious as he had seen Philip and the others because South, China and Japan forced him to come and congratulate the country but he never did and went to check the military ground, to which leads now.

"That cannot be- I clearly saw you talking with South and China. Before even I left that crowded place."

He stated with a serious expression. With these words, Martial laughed...

"My, I think you confuse me for someone else..."

"Then, Who are you if not?"

Chuckling, Martial narrowed his eyes to the Korean...

"I'll make my answers simple... I was the one in the field when you were at war with your brother, The Philippine forces, You must know me by that, hmm?"

The Filipino rested his back on the chair, putting his hands on his crossed legs

Furrowing his brows, North thought deeply yet he couldn't or wouldn't remember the Korean War.

"The Philippine War Lord or Dictator, Martial Law is my name."

Just then North Korea widened his eyes...

"Aren't you the one that was declared dead by Asean and UN?!"

Smiling as though he heard those words for years, Martial didn't responed to the Korean.

The story has started with a new beginning.

With one missing, one declared dead, one hoping, one searching, one angry, two hiding, two rebelling and one accomplice.

The End of the Martial Law Regime brought upon The New Free Regime

Lets see how they all turn out until the end..

[To be Continued...]

Hello, Author here!

Just wanted to say that thank you for those old readers who waited for this rewrite!

Anyways, Just a tip, I changed the flow of the plot and story as well the characters... Bill and Terrie are twins and are both the Anti Terrors (I wasn't contented with only a female child), CPP and NPA aren't twins anymore as NPA is the second child and CPP the third.

NDF, CPP and NPA are siblings by blood, abandoned by their parents during the cold war, Martial adopted them later...

Just like my other books, I'll update whenever I get to have an idea on a new chapter.

That's it for now!

See you all on the next chapter!

(4109 Words.)

2. Purpose.

□□□□□□□□ ·≪ ∞ ≫· □□□□□□□□

"Heneral! Paunmanhin po sa biglaang pagdating pero nagpadala po ang presidente ng telegrama para sa iyo."

[General! Forgive me for the sudden arrival but the president has sent a telegram for you.]

Turning around, The swift sound of dust below his boots withdrew as he turn his head and body to the soldier, who held a parchment with the stamp of the president on his hand.

"Basahin mo, Aquilino."

[Read It, Aquilino.]

Looking down to the messenger, A red eye flashed at the shadow covering his face as he watched the telegram get passed to his own men.

He had been a country all his life, That was until another one of his kind told him, he was somewhat an abnormal existence. Due to his skills and knowledge that he gained during his stay in Madrid as a strategist for the Empire, He was placed in a high position among his people.

A Commanding-General of the Revolutionary Army.

Just below the Commander-in-Chief, The President.

Martial's eyes turned back to the map on the table infront of him. Chess pieces of black and white placed in a formation with the names of towns, provinces and places under them. Trails of dirt to mark the place of their troops and trenches against the enemy, The Americans and the Spanish.

"Heneral, Pinapapunta po kayo ng presidente sa Cabanatuan."

[General, The president is ordering you to come to Cabanatuan.]

"Sino pa?"

[Who else?]

His voice let out a gruff tone, Moving the pieces of Black to a certain place on the map.

"Si... Heneral Luna din po."

[General Luna too.]

At This, The General froze in his position and turned his head to the human holding the parchment of order.

"Si Luna...? Ang Heneral Artikulo Uno, hmm?"

[Luna...? The Article One General, hmm?]

The Infamous Heneral Antonio Luna was rumoured to be Martial's favorite General among the list of soldiers inside the military. If He was called the Bloodthirsty War Seeking General, His accomplice would be The Article one General;

Artikulo Uno: Ang hindi sumunod sa punong heneral ay tatanggalan ng ranggo at ipapapatay ng walang paglilitis sa hukumang militar.

(Article One: Those who fail to follow the orders of the head General will be stripped of their rank and then summarily executed by the Military.)

Little did they know, That Martial and Luna was closed friends even during the spanish occupation as they met in Madrid, as to, Luna was studying Medicine and he was coincidentally visiting the school he was going for an inspection.

"Pues, Ano ang dahilan?"

[Then, What's the reason?]

The General let out a scoff upon hearing there was no reason stated. Without hesitation;

"Kung walang rason ang presidente para sa aking pagpunta sa Cabanatuan... Sabihin mo kay Philip at sa Presidente na walang katuturan ang pagpunta ko doon, Sa Halip na alam ko kung nasaan sila dahil ako ang nagaayos ng kanilang transportasyon sa ibang lugar."

[If the president doesn't have a reason about my presence in Cabanatuan… Tell Philip and the President that it is worthless for me to come there, Instead, I know where they are as I am the one who arranges their transportation to another place.]

The messenger was stunned but kept a straight posture towards the fearsome general. Upon Saluting, the soldier went back to his horse and rode back to the place where the President and the Prime minister was currently staying.

"Jose!"

Martial shouted from his place as another yet teenage soldier came and saluted.

"Heneral!"

[General!]

"Pumunta ka sa kampo ni Luna, Pigilan mo sila sa pagpunta ng Cabanatuan. Sabihin mo utos ito ng C omandante Heneral !"

[Go to Luna's Camp, Stop them from going to Cabanatuan. Tell them this is an order from the Commanding Genera!]

The soldier wasted no time and hastely got on a horse and rode off as quickly as possible.

…

Martial did everything he can within his power to hold off the Americans on their lines. Worried for the soldiers of other places, His soldiers were trained from hell as possible as they were dragged into this war, Men, Women and Teens, Everyone had to participate.

It was possible… Victory was possible, if the president and his younger brother, Philip, only listened to his plans and strategies yet they listened to their favorite General, General Gregorio Del Pilar, The middle child of

their family.

Only one was listening to him.

Philia, Philip's twin. The one twin that voluntarily came to Spain and be on the palm of the Spanish Empire. She wasn't used to anything vulgar but the spanish empire did use her for intel gathering and assasinations, Having to claim the title 'Shadow of Spain.'

With the stress and anxiety filled Martial's head, He leaned on the window frame, with an irritated expression. Knowing that his messenger still hasn't come back, It already hit him with realization that the soldier won't come back as the possibilities of death was high for the young lad.

Then, Out of his thoughts, The lad came back with a bullet wound to his side but his horse had disappeared. In a hurry, The other soldiers came to help him.

Martial noticed that the teen held a letter close to him.

"Heneral."

[General.]

The teen muttered as Martial got close and let him sit on the ground as the small group of medical soldiers treat his wound.

"Huwag ka muna gumalaw-"

[Don't move-]

"Heneral, May sulat po pinadala si Ginang Philia para sa inyo."

[General, Madam Philia sent you a letter.]

Shocked at the words of the soldier, He went and got the letter from the soldier's hands after thanking the teen for coming back alive.

Martial hastily opened the letter and started reading. There, He stopped at a particular line as he froze on his place.

'Ano...?'

[What...?]

He thought, Rereading the letter, Yet, No matter how much he reread the words, It was the same and it would never change.

' Ha muerto Antonio Luna de San Pedro y Novicio Ancheta y lo he confirmado con el propio Aguinaldo. Lo siento hermano. '

[Antonio Luna de San Pedro y Novicio Ancheta has died and I have confirmed it with Aguinaldo himself. I'm sorry Brother.]

With Philia's handwriting in Spanish, Martial knew that his close aid has been officially assasinated by the President's order and if ever he did go there, He would've died along with his Friend.

He wanted to scream, Cry and kill the government or anyone. He was sick with the way his younger brother's appointed governed the republic. It was a mess...

Yet... He felt empty.

It was as if...

He put those emotions of his away... Locked inside himself where no one would look.

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"어떻게 헬리콥터 추락 사고를 당한 겁니까, 노스?"

[How did you even get on a helicopter crash, North?]

Slowly, North Korea turned his head to the Filipino, who was reading a news paper on his hand and seemed unfazed that he spoke another language.

"Just When do you speak my language?"

The korean strictly demanded and answer but his expression

showed that he was weirdly confused at Martial for speaking Korean all of a sudden as their conversations were always in English.

"Since 1952."

"Oh..."

Silence fell between the two, creating an awkward atmosphere...

"Your answer?"

Martial started, glancing at the korean on the other side of the coach.

It had been a week since their first encounter and some of North Korea's wound were nearly healed but he still has to be examined as it looks like he has broken a few bones.

"Hm, I clearly remember the country representative offered us to tour some parts of the city via helicopter, I had to be in a different one... Don't know why and at a split second the helicopter I was riding was on a mountain forest crashing down."

He continued.

"Now, that I recall... There was a woman, a countryhuman with the same flag as the country representative, came to me during the welcome party and told me not to agree with the offer... I thought it was strange and never did anything."

Martial lets down the newspaper on the table on his right and stared at the Korean.

"What?"

The korean suspiciously asked as he was becoming uncomfortable with the Filipino staring.

"당신은 남아 있어야합니다. 그녀는 당신에게 호의를 베풀었고 당신은 그것을 무시했습니다."

[You should've stayed. She did you a favor and you ignored it.]

"어쨌든 그녀는 당신에게 무엇입니까? 당신은 그 여자를 가까이 알고 있는 것 같습니다."

[What is she to you anyway? You seem to know that woman close.]

The Filipino sighed and crossed his legs together by putting his left arm behind the sofa, He turned his head to the Korean...

"To put it simply, She is my youngest sister."

North Korea hummed in response.

"I think she came to your country for trading reasons."

"Her? I don't remember her and there was no country present there, only humans."

North fired back...

"Ah- She did, But in her human form with her human name."

The Korean's brows rised up in disbelief. Martial took his own hand and slid down his sleeve, to reveal a tatoo... more of words than the usual with a symbol.

"What the f*ck is that?"

"My human name, to be precise."

North Korea came closer as the words became clearer for him

"Ferdinio Gonzalo O. Maharlika...? Doesn't sound like you."

Martial sighed...

"Her human name is, Miria Romulez O. Maharlika."

The clock chimed, silence befall them again... Within a few second later, North Korea realized and recognized the name.

"Miria... That Woman?!"

Martial flinched at the sudden outburst of the Korean, who seemed shocked at the revealation but still as calm as ever.

North Korea had known from the start, That during Martial's rule, he was affliated with powerful sectors all over the world and was acquainted with some of the world's powerful humans. Yet, what he didn't expect was one of those powerful humans were his younger sister.

"Why are you surprised?"

"Hmm, I wonder why? Is it because your sister is known to be the 'Iron Lady of Asia.' or the 'Impregnable Lady' ?"

The Filipino was unfazed by those titles. He knew Philia would one day climb high ike him, He just didn't expect that they would stand on equal terms but still leave the other two siblings below them, as 'weak' countries.

"Well? You're North Korea, correct? Why does it seem to you that my sister is frightening?"

North Korea furrowed his eye brows and leaned forward from his position...

"My previous appointed kept talking and complaining about tha woman that it got stuck in my head."

The korean scratched his head in frustration and stood up, causing him to loose balance as he became dizzy for standing up too fast. Due to reflexes, Martial caught him from behind... Startled at the position of them both, that looked like close friends or lovers, North instantly gave into habit and grabbed Martial's arms and swung the Filipino's body to the ground and putting his arms behind him.

This is what a habit to North, A martial artist.

The loud sound of Martial being slammed to the ground, alarmed the people inside the house.

"What was that?"

CCP came about, emerging from a hallway connected to a staircase to the second floor. froze in his spot seeing the scene of the two dictators...

"What happened?"

The twins came out of the kitchen, holding some pieces of chocolate on their hands, with some of the leftovers all over their cheeks and mouth...

"Have you been eating chocolate again, You Two?!"

Martial shouted from his position below the Korean, face on the floor.

The twins recoiled and ran to the kitchen again with grins on their faces...

"Is there a drama going on?"

NPA appeared beside CCP, frightening the younger, as the older didn't make a sound of footsteps or even her presence is concealed like a ghost.

NDF came inside from the outside holding in his arms was Eru, just fresh from taking a bath.

The two dictator countries felt awkward and slowly stood up helping each other, While some of the dirty minded children started to think of situations of intercourse.

After dusting themselves, They awkwardly left the room in opposite directions, as they left, the siblings had a laugh with the scene they've seen, hoping that their adoptive father would finally have a lover, after centuries of being single because of his notorious personality and image.

So, They started praying even though they were an atheist.

"Has the plan gone successfully?"

"Yes, Sir. They have crashed in Nueva Ecija mountains."

"Good, Good. Keep the media quiet about this, use force if you have to."

"As you wish."

'Idiots'

Walking down a dim lit hall, A woman seemingly 6 foot tall suddenly grew to a 7-8 foot in a split second, with flickers of yellow and blue floating around her. The black hair swaying behind her became blue as her lightly tanned skin became red and blue on her forhead with a white triangle on the side of her face.

She opened sharp eyes of the colors gold and blue, stopping in her tracks as someone called her name from behind...

"Philia!"

Turning around, Philia narrowed her eyes to her supposed to be older siblings, Del Pilar.

"Del, What do you want?"

Philia stated with a cold tone, no warmth she gave to her sibling as deep inside she despised the way they look at their own country as they enjoy its luxuries in parties and celebrations than to help and develop the whole nation to equal other countries.

"I just wanted to inform you-"

"If its about the party or the fact that America is present, I don't want and need to attend to a useless and dull place."

Philia showed no chance in where Del pilar can respond as her presence is enough to make him shut up, as it was overwhelming like Martial's... But their elder brother was overwhelming and suffocating at the same time.

Del kept his mouth shut as Philia left to her own way.

There were two reason that she didn't want to attend the celebration inside this presidential palace. One, because it was usless and dull and a waste of time, The other is America...

America, had to be her old lover that betrayed her for choosing her twin brother and pressing her elder brother with unlawful charges. She felt betrayed, angered and saddened, that she locked herself inside her room for a month and when she finally came out, she forced herself to change...

She studied law, medicine, crimonology and other more, rising to her currnet position as the "Iron Lady of Asia.".

Sure, some wanted to meet her in person, but she ignores and push away everyone except her only inspiration, Martial. He understood her, She understood him when no one did, but upon reaching her ears that he died without any proper investigation as Philip pursuaded Asean to close the case, She took everything from the NBI, the police and everyone else and invstigated it herself.

"I thought you had move one from that American? or haven't you?"

"Are you questioning my position right now, Gregorio Del Pilar?"

Del cringed at his full name, knowing that he was close to enraging the famous lady for being strict and cold...

"Never forget Pilar. I took this country to the highest position in the ICC and put it on the map, Without me... The map wouldn't have recognized us as a country, Only a colony to others."

Philia slammed the door to a room she was going to enter after those words. Del Pilar felt enraged, It was always the same reasons, explainations and excuses. No matter how much he wanted to scream his achievements, he couldn't think of anything that he did for the country globally, only locally. This goes the same for Philip, The only thing the other twin did was fail and sell land to other countries so that his own country wouldn't die...

"Tch!"

He stomped away, angered from their conversation, muttering

curses against the female and the Martial law regime, rediculing everything about them.

Meanwhile, Philia leaned on the door she locked earlier, hearing her older brother curse at her secretly as well as her elder brother. Tears streamed down her face...

No matter how mature, professional, and stict she acts, she was still a countryhuman with feelings and sympathy, She was still a growing adult that knows the corruption of her own two brothers.

"Have I gone crazy...? No matter how mature and high my position get, Del is still my Kuya... But I can't bring myself to respect him after they planned to kill Kuya Mar..."

Philia sniffled and wiped her tears away, Walking to the window and opening it.

Soft and cold winds came in, hitting her whole structure. She breathe it in, finding relaxed with it.

Philia then came to her bed, where two letters laid peacefully, A smirk climed up her face as she hurriedly opened the letters and read it with expectations.

Soon, Her smirk grew wider...

"I would be willing to partner with you, As to, with Russia agreeing... We would be greatful to have an ally inside enemy territory."

Philia quietly giggled, fiddling her hands on the words;

Respectfully, People's Republic of China and The Russian Federation.

She had been planning this for a while now. If the American Government would take their country in one command under the current rule of Philip and his appointed, the Aquino's, It was wise to have a backup plan... That was the original plan of Martial, if ever his regime would be infiltrated with American hands.

"My purpose is to protect this country, Yet, someone is being too

much of a puppet to America."

She muttered, followed with a laugh.

Anyone would think she is crazy, but she lost her stable sanity long ago...

"Now... What should I do next? Oh, I know, Lets stir a controversy, Shall we?"

She let out a laugh again before burning the letters after reading them in a lit candle on her desk...

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"Where is she?"

Philip whispered to his brother on his side as he welcome guests.

"She's not coming."

"Tch, Why is she so spoiled... She has been spoiled to much by Martial."

Philip stated with disgust, saying his words as if they weren't twins but strangers...

"Now, Now, She is still your twin."

Philip glared at Del Pilar, expressing a look of disbelief and disgust... He looked as if he was disgust in his position as "twin of Philia".

They continued greeting guests, and went inside the celebration hall after no more came.

Philip and Del went separate ways and talked with other humans and countries, That was until Philip encountered a fellow he didn't want to see but was forced to invite.

"Hello there, dear Philip."

"I don't want to see your face, China."

The chinese chuckled, uneffected with the filipino's words...

"Why not, Ma-I?"

"Enough with your self, China."

A voice from behind Philip came, as China changed his expression to cold, staring at his rival and enemy behind the one he wants to conquer land and sea from...

"Ame-"

"If you have nothing more to say, Get the f*ck away from my lover."

China smiled once more then took his fan and walked away to his comrade on the sides, Russia. Upon seeing this, Philip then send his greetings but was ignored by the tall Russian, showing no interest at the small filipino country.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine."

Philip said, feeling discomfort towards the American. They had been dating for years, and upon those years, Philip lost interest towards the man and showed interest in many others but was too afraid of break up.

Talk about unfaithful...

But then again... Philip had a secret that no one knew...

And that was, He used his body to get what he wanted from some. Quite dirty right? But no... Its actually his choice to do it with different people, be it country or humans, he doesn't choose, just to keep his enjoyment.

...

"You are quiet today, Russia."

China grinned looking at his comrade, blending in with the darkness while leaning on a wall.

"That country reprentative is trying to get my attention before that damned capitalist arrived."

"Hmm? How so?"

China looked at the crowd of humans and countries talking to each other while listening to his comrade.

"Doing useless flattery words... Quite dull, I am more interested in that woman you have been talking about that wants to partner up."

Russia glanced to the Chinese.

"I had intially thought she would be here, as expected she lives here, but it seems as though she won't attend."

Upon hearing those words, Russia clicked his tongue and went out for a breather... He went outside to the palace gardens and took out a cigarette to smoke.

He found it dull and boring, The gardens, look dull and boring as flowers were not doing so well and the state of the garden itself was chaos, vines were already climbing on the palace's walls, some bugs fly here and there, weeds were already knee high.

Russia shook his head in disappointment and continued walking.

Only to stop, when he encountered a unprecendent scene infront of him...

Blood scattered here and there as if someone sparyed blood on the ground that it caused a large explosion, The water on the fountain was stained and was now red. A body laid there on the tall grass, missing an arm with multiple stab and bullet holes.

Shocked at the scene infront of him, He looked around to see no one, No doors nearby, one pathway and that was the way he came

in and an opened window from the second floor with a woman staring down at him with a cold expression...

"Have you done this?"

He stated deepening his accent and changing his expression to cold.

"Он собирался разоблачить мои планы, я должен был."

[He was going to expose my plans, I had to.]

Russia was stunned at the woman for speaking his language but kept composure...

"Кто ты?"

[Who are you?]

He demanded in a strict, cold voice, as he glare at the lady that seemed to cleaning a bloodied knife on her hands.

"Я думал, ты знаешь меня с 1900-х годов, дорогая Россия."

[I thought you have known me since the 1900's, dear Russia.]

Russia's eyes widened, finally realizing the familiar voice he was speaking to...

"Philia?"

"Correct! Thought you forgotten little old me."

Philia grinned, stabbing the tip of the knife to the window frame and leaning to the window...

"But you- There were news that you were in a coma!"

Upon hearing this, Philia laughed and slightly shed a tear, looking at the russian below her window.

"If I was in a coma, would I have sent a notice wanting to do business with you and China?"

"You were Miria Romulez?"

Philia nodded and Russia smirked, Piquing his interest in the woman even more...

The two stared at each other until one of them had to run away from the crime scene.

As Russia ran away from the scene, He turned his head to the Filipin, who mouthed the words

'See you Later.'

He smiled and disappeared in the darkness as she closed her window and pretended to be a victim from the murder outside when she was the one who did it...

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"It has been centuries since they left, hmm?"

Looking at the clock on his hands, He sighed...

"Isn't there something else you can do than mourn your time with those two?"

His brother crossed his arms looking at him with furrowed brows and a tired look.

"What is it to you, Spain. You handled our colonies and treated them like children. Those two would not escape my mind in any way, as they made me felt like a father than a king."

"Oh please, S.E., Those two practically committed treason and went against you."

Spain recalled the events of the past, as to, while gathering his paperwork from the table and reviewing it carefully.

"They still treated me like a parent despite being their colonizer."

S.E. faintly smiled, having a picture of a child Martial and Philia...

"Yeah, Yeah, Get your ass up. We're going on a vacation."

S.E. looked at his younger brother with confusion as he knows, Spain doesn't take vacations unless he was invited to something or it is important to him.

"How so?"

"Philip invited us to his country for their successful revolution against Martial."

S.E.'s expression saddened, knowing that the one he pictured as his son was decalared dead.

"Oh, and Philia sent you a letter."

Spain took a letter from his vest and gave it to the older, who slowly read the contents... As he watched S.E. read, he noticed his expression changed from sad to happy and shocked.

"I'm curious. What is in that letter."

Spain tried to peek but S.E. pulled it into his pocket and quietly left the room.

"Ok...?"

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'I know you have heard about my brother's death announced by the UN... That is a false statement, I have proof that Brother is alive. The only thing I have left missing is his location. I hope you receive this soon, Padre.

Love: Philia Maharlika, Your annoying Filipino daughter.'

[To Be Continued...]

Hello again readers!

Hope ya'll are still safe and sick free^^

Just a tip, All other languages were translated from google translator, so if you have a problem, blame the google translator.

Any suggestions or anything to add in my grammar or wording?

Additional info:

Philia's human name: Miria Romulez O. Maharlika.

Martials human name: Ferdinio Gonzalo O. Maharlika.

Philip's human name: Jose Pacifico O. Maharlika

Del Pilar's Human name: Gregorio "Agila" O. Maharlika.

The middle initial "O." means Ophir.

The author would use this in a later chapter, just so you can be informed who is who.

Philia's name is inspired from the names Miriam Defensor Santiago and Imelda Romualdez Marcos.

Martial's name in inspired from the name Ferdinand Marcos and Gonzalo means battle or war in spanish.

Philip's name means- Jose: God will give... Pacifico: Peace-loving... In short God will give loving peace.

Del Pilar's is inspired from Gregorio Del Pilar(The general) and Agila means Eagle.

Thats it for now! This was fun in my research!

Bye for now!

(4434 Words.)

3. An Eagle and A Sleeping Tiger.

(Warning : This may contain misleading information about the

2016 Philippine elections.)

Echoed from the bathroom sink, dripping noise of a liquid dropping from a high place.

Leaning towards the sink, Looking at the very same reflection in the mirror every now and then. Sickened of his own illness, He tried to forget it so that he could leave peacefully yet signs of it worsening comes out here and now.

The metallic smell of the blood dripping from his nose, left him disgusted.

Remembering all the times where he had to be bathed in blood during the war periods, somehow, he enjoyed those days where he could run free with bloodlust yet now he had to restrain it to the point of feeling his own.

Sighing, Martial wiped his face with water over flowing from the sink that was now filled with the irony smell of his own blood.

"Why is it this time of year...?"

He complained, putting his small towel around his neck.

It was ***the*** time of year... Election Year.

It had been 4 weeks since the week long celebration of the EDSA Revolution and it had been a nuisance, not just to the government as well as the Filipinos. As a celebration had just happened a total of 4 weeks ago and here we ago again with a new set of election candidates.

It did saddened him that he cannot participate as a country representative...

Then, again, he had an infamous reputation as a ruthless dictator.

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Country Representatives In Election Year.

According to the United Nations, Article about Countryhumans;

Countryhumans aren't required to participate in election year as there can only be one and that is the country recognized by the government and the people.

Yet, If one country has more than 1 countryhuman. The election candidates or the sitting representative can choose the next representative for the nation.

Election candidates can get chosen by their supporting countryhuman and can get seated if ever the human elector wins. This only applies to countries that have a democratic system.

A nation with only 1 countryhuman representative ever since its founding can decide who would be the next leader of their people.

A nation with 2 or more countryhumans are required to follow their people's choice or the next human leader's choice...

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The three eldest children of the retired Filipino general had been missing home since 3 days ago as their soldiers had a confrontation in Mindanao and is need for their guidance, presumed to be stuck there for 3 decades according to NPA, who just miss messing with her twin younger siblings.

The twins, on the other hand, had already established a familiar and friendly relationship with the North Korean. As North Korea is being influenced by the twins, it just goes vice versa for these three...

"What are you three doing...?"

The Filipino stared at the three sitting at the couch, The Anti Terrors and North Korea was holding cards in their hand and all sorts of candies on the coffee table as replacements for... money...?

"They insisted—"

"Join us, Papa!"

The twins encouraged Martial. But in the eyes of a parent it looks like they are gambling in the living room... In addition to that, Their hair were all over the place with their eyes half open and was still asleep. This applied to the three of them.

"You three look like you've gone into a cult. Stop that this instance."

Martial started confiscating the candies and card they held in their hands, the twins started to have tears on the edges of their eyes...

"Go to your room. Find something more valuable to learn that this."

The Filipino strictly told the two siblings as they quietly ran to their rooms. North Korea stared at Martial, who cleaned the table and put them in one place.

"You look tired as hell."

The korean stated bluntly, continuing his words;

"Have you even gotten sleep these past few days?"

"I don't get any peaceful sleep every 6 years on election week..."

North sighed, following Martial's movements everywhere. Observing the Filipino's moves that seemed to be unsteady and wavering.

"Come here for a sec."

The North Korean signalled Martial to come forward and sit beside him as he fix a pillow next to his side. Martia became puzzled for a while and only sat a few inches beside the korean and looked at North with a confused expression.

"Lay here."

North Korea pointed at the pillow beside him with a uninterested expression. Martial looked at the pillow and North with widened eyes and speechless look, deciding whether or nto to do so.

Taking his time, North Korea became irritated because of the wating and grabbed Martial's tied hair on his shoulder and pulled him to the pillow.

"What was that for—!"

"Stay there until I say so."

"Huh?"

Determined but embarassed internaly, North arranged Martial's long crimson hair and laid it on his lap and started gently brushing it with his hands...

"The twins told me, You don't sleep these days."

"Did they now... They're becoming too talkative these days."

"They also told me, You fall asleep faster when someone brushes your hair."

Martial then widens his eyes, feeling that North was gently pulling his hair, in attempt to escape he quickly rose up but was pulled back to the pillow as the Korean once again pulled his hair, keeping him hostage there in his position.

Truly, Martial had long hair that he often ties to with a pony tail as it had grown over the years and he refuses to even cut it, only trimming it from time to time.

"Let go... I'm busy."

"You're always busy when you're actually not. Stop lying."

The Filipino sighed in defeat and stayed in his position for a while, feeling relaxed for a while.

"Now, Isn't that an obedient Cat."

"What cat?"

"You act like a cat."

"Ha?!"

The Korean Dictator chuckled and said no more, as he smile unknowingly. Martial noticed and stared in awe.

He kept quiet as he turned his gaze on another object, The scene was now imprinted in his mind as he smiled...

Minutes later, Silence took control as a warm atmosphere was all around the room. Seemingly, playing with Martial's hair, North leaned forward to check on the Filipino, To see, a countryhuman sleeping without care and with peace.

The Filipino's expression was so relaxed that the Korean immediately leaned back to his former position, with wide eyes as he was the only one who saw that relaxed face of Martial, as the Filipino always wore a stern and cold expression...

' Ah, Shit... Why are you so weirdly attractive while you sleep? '

He thought, covering half his face with one of his hands.

Unknowingly, Two 'creeps' were hiding on the hallway recording everything and sending it to their older sister in Mindanao.

A screech as loud as a screeching tire could go, echoed in the forest starting a confrontation with a rebel group and the Military soldiers.

"NPA, What the F*ck!!"

NDF shouted, from the distance inside a tent with a few soldiers gaurding it.

"Kuya!~ Look at this!"

NPA skipped to the tent with her phone in hand, showing to her brother a recording that she recieved from the twins...

CPP and NDF took a peek, to which, made one of them leave

without another word and another to release a horrifying aura that covered their whole rebel base.

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"Why waste your energy, looking for someone dead?"

Philip bluntly told his twin sister, Sitting by the window, drinking her usual tea that she picked up from studying in Britain for years.

"Why waste your breath trying to convince me?"

Philia shooted back, looking out the window as the breeze let itself in.

"Ha! Heard you let a spanish bastard in here?"

"What is it to you? I let my *Father* here"

Emphasizing the word "Father", Philip became angry as his brows furrowed to the center and his teeth was gritted...

"Why do you say ***He*** is your father, when Itay is your ***real*** Father?!"

Philia then turned her head to her twin brother, looking down on him with an angered face. She stood up after placing her cup gently to the table, leaning towards Philip's ear and whispered;

"How can I forgive someone who couldn't save mother?"

Her whisper was cold and filled with emptiness. Philip, then, had enough of Philia's behavior and slapped her across the face, making the female turn her head to the side, holding the cheek filled with red spot.

"You take that back! He raised you from childhood!"

"He abandoned us! He thought nothing but his stupid ideology! S.E, at least treated us as if we were valuable, unlike him, He ignored his very responsibilities after Inay left!"

Philip was to slap Philia again, when the female caught his arm and

glared at him like always, yet, this time, her expression was more terrifying and dark.

"Next time, You lecture me about family. Think about I felt for 300 years."

Philia let go of Philip's arm after tossing it to the side with an angry face. She walked out of the room, her heels echoing from the wooden floor. Philip looked to the floor, holding his arm.

"Itay...?"

"Huwag kang magalala Philip, Babalikan ko kayo lahat. Balang araw..."

[Don't worry Philip, I'll come back for you all. One day...]

Katipunan's smile faded away with a tear that dropped to the floor.

' He cared... I know he did... He just never came back. '

Philip's tears dripped and dropped one by one like falling rain...

The first reason, why the family was torn apart...

Misunderstandings between each other's intentions and beliefs.

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"Martial!"

A voice from afar, a familiar and nostalgic tone rang in his ears. Turning his head to the voice, he ran and hugged a familliar figure.

"Martial..."

"Inay...?"

Looking up, He saw that his mother's face was filled with blood, coming down from a bullet wound, covering her entire face with the red liquid

flowing down to her chin.

"Nay... Y-Your h-head!"

The familiar figure only frowned as Martial took himself away from it, He saw the horrifying seen of the figure's eyes turned black as if their eye balls were taken out and the soket was left empty flowing out were red and black substances as the figure walk near him.

"Stay away! Go!"

Martial cried out, getting far away from the figure but it kept walking near him...

"No! Stay away from me!"

"You can't escape from me, my dear Martial~"

Horrified, he stumbled on nothing, letting the terrifying creature near him.

"N-No!"

Suddenly, he felt a sharp sting of pain in his chest, looking down, he saw a large cut being ekindled with black flames that made him scream once he saw it. As he clench his chest, he saw that the creature wasn't there any longer but the figures of Philip, Philia and Del on the distance, looking at him with pity or disgust.

"Please—"

"Who are you?"

He widened his eyes, furrowing his brows with the pain, taking over him slowly were darkness as he felt again a large amount of pain began to go to him yet now inside this eye where an eye patch was on top.

Groaning, Huffing, Struggling and Finally trembling. Martial ripped off his eye patch, revealing a glowing golden eye with a black sclera surrounding it, Drak liquid flowing out like he was crying in one eye yet he really was crying in pain.

"Make it stop... Please..."

Starting from pain, Now whispers started to fill his head as he stare at himself with the reflection he had on the floor.

"Who are you! Why do you keep haunting me?!"

He shouted at his won reflection, He then coughed up blood. Covering some of his relfection.

Martial, angered, wiped the blood to see his own reflection to see that it was showing a much more empty, soulless him with his black wings spread out on his back yet he didn't show it in real time.

"What is this...?"

An eagle landed on his reflection's side and a tiger rested on the other side of his reflection, seemingly like going to sleep.

"An Eagle? A Tiger?"

Suddenly, The pain that he felt from his body disappeared in a second as he saw his reflection back out from te light coming from his back.

Turning his head around, He saw a figure with blinding light covering their face yet Martial could see that they had quite the long hair that reached their chest of the color yellow. Robes seemingly like used in ancient Rome yet filled with golden accessories as well as a golden halo like crown above them.

It felt like he was facing God himself.

"Hello Martial."

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With the Help of the Spanish Empire, Philia was able to track down to the last place where Martial's location would be. She finally pinned Nueva Ecija as the last place where Martial should hide, If she fails this, she promised to stop searching for her dead brother and let him lay in peace.

Yet, Due to the closing elections. Spain and the Spanish Empire had already gone back to their country before they were forced to leave from the Philippines.

Truth be told, Philia hadn't slept for days, trying to search her brother everywhere. She even went as far as asking former spanish colonies in hopes of her brother stayong with them, but to no avail.

"Nueva Ecija... If I still can't find you. I'll give up and follow what I should've done years ago."

The female muttered, glancing at the screens to which contain live videos of her spies that she sent to Nueva Ecija to even spot a single clue that her brother was there.

As some of her spies walked, kept their normality into a minimun. She finally spotted one clue and it was a large one.

"Stop! Right there."

Philia stopped one of her agents as they stopped walking from their position.

"Turn left and walk straight."

The human spy followed waht they were told and walked straight after turning left, stopping on a pedestrian lane, where cars are still on going with the green light. On the other side was a resturant with some people inside, yet two people caught Philia's eyes.

An elderly man and a man that looks like in his 20s, sitting opposite of each other.

Philia knew one of the men's hair style was too familiar as well as their choice of clothes. It did look like it was the fashion choice of the 90s yet it stil had a modern look to it. Indeed, it became more familiar when those two men smiled at each other...

"This can't be a coincidence!"

Finally, she recognized the elderly man... And it was one of the presidential candidates for the incoming elections.

Philia widens her eyes when she saw that they shook hands and a golden glow like locked their hands. This only occurs when a countryhuman and a human, most especially to a president makes a deal. A countryhuman's spirit would automatically seal the deal.

It could only be undone, when the deal is over or one of them would back out.

This gave Philia more than enough hope to expect that Martial was alive. And her brother was standing there and signed a deal with a presidential candidate, to which is in the incoming elections.

"Retreat. Abort the mission."

Philia talked through a walkie talkie, smiling at the image she saw from the hope that she had been grasping for years...

Her dream for a better Philippines was about to happen.

[To Be Continued...]

4. Unprecedented Results.

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"A guest?"

"Yes, He suddenly wanted to come over. Is that alright with you?"

Martial and North Korea walked down the halls, entering the office of the Filipino.

"I am just a guest your guest here, All decisions rests in your hands, not mine."

North Korea leaned his back as he sat on a chair inside the room, Letting his back relax on the said object.

"Still, It would be very uncomfortable once you meet him... He is

quite... disorderly."

Martial seemed to avoid eye contact, seemingly, embarassed as he talked and was internally cringing on some memories he recalled from the past.

"I can handle it. If they are as half as chaotic as the twins, Then I can manage."

The retired Filipino could only sigh, Putting the coversation to an end... Martial turned his gaze to the Korean, who seemed to observe and look around the room little by little until they made eye contact for a few seconds.

They stared into each other's eyes, until a door bell broke the silence.

"Oh, Ah, Sorry..."

Martial awkwardly coughed, looking in another direction.

"No worries—"

North Korea also looked in another direction. An awkward atmosphere was created between the two dictators until the door bell, once again, rang...

The Filipino rushed to open the front door leaving the Korean inside his office, Leaving North Korea to have his thoughts process

' I swear... They shone like Rubies as some point. '

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Meanwhile, Martial opened the front door to an old friend, to which he didn't meet for 30 years.

"PKP..."

"Martial! Good to see you again, Comrade!"

A red flag, with the golden hammer and sickle and star above

placed on the middle of his face, Written in an arc like style was; Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas, And written below the hammer and sickle was the acronym; PKP - 1930.

"It has been a decade since we've last spoken."

"It has?! Damn, Time do flies so pass... And I'm still guessing you're still single, hmm?"

PKP looked at Martial law, inspectng some sort of sign that he has someone, but dismayed when he spotted nothing on the Filipino.

"Haha. I don't plan on having one."

Martial Law and PKP friendship goes way back to the Marcos Era. They met when the former president pardoned the old yet original members of the orginal communist party of the Philippines.

PKP's members supported the former president after being pardoned, That was when CPP-NPA-NDF split away from the orginal communist party and started their own as an opposition, From there Martial Law and PKP shared interest in many ways and therefore became best friends a couple of months later until the present...

"Really now?"

"Yes."

The former Communist, went inside the house and was welcomed by the modernity of the inside than the outside that looked like it dated back from the colonization times.

"I assume, You're still using your infinite wealth?"

"Can't deny."

PKP went and made himself at home by sitting in the couch there in the living room. Resting his bag beside him and looked around the room with his eyes.

"I know we haven't met for a decade now. But I feel overwhelmed

by the inside structure of your house alone... I feel like I'm too broke compared to you."

The former communist sarcastically put his remark and looked at Martial, frowning, on why he was still rich beyond compare when he didn't show up in public for more than a decade long.

"Nonsense, I don't even use 90% of what I have in my bank account."

"Still rich."

They continued their conversation in another topic that seemed that the both of them were getting too fired up. While hearing their discussion, North Korea emerged from another hall, crossing the living room to get the the kitchen, as he became thirsty all of a sudden.

Caught inside the topic, PKP stopped suddenly and laid eyes on North Korea then to Martial.

"I didn't know you had your boyfriend over..."

"What?!"

Martial was caught off guard as well as the Korean, as he stopped in his tracks.

"You've misunderstood! He isn't—"

"Sure~ But why are you suddenly defensive? Is there something going on?"

PKP teased, looking at both the Filipino and Korean. Smirking afterwards...

North Korea just hid his red face over his hand and went straight to the kitchen, as he intended. Martial Law, alarmed, as he was in the beginning, Glared at his old friend and went after the Korean to apologize.

Of course, PKP took thought of this gesture in another way.

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"North- North, I apologize for his behavior. Don't get it the wrong way—"

"Its alright, really, You've already warned me earlier. No need for fruitless worries."

"Are you sure?"

The North Korean only nodded, with his back turned from the Filipino holding a full glass of water in hand.

"Its no problem... I am also a guest here that is overdue, It is normal for someone to misuderstand."

He then proceeded to chug down the water he held from the glass on his hand until it was empty and not one drop was left. Martial glanced down to the glass on North's hand and saw it was shaking just as the Korean was trembling.

"Are you really fine? You're trembling—"

"Yes, Yes. I am extremely fine."

Without any more words to speak, Martial left North to himself, knowing he would just consistenly ask the condition of the Korean to the point that he would be annoying and he doesn't want that.

Meanwhile, North's ears had become flushed and warm for the Korean, remembering the staring he and Martial did a little while ago and the misunderstanding of Martial's guest just made it worse for the Korean to even think straight.

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Watching PKP leave, Martial had a smile on his face as he half-heartedly wave goodbye to his old friend, while North Korea was

beside him looking at the old communist with widened eyes.

"Is he alright?"

"Ah, yes, I just gave him a piece of my mind."

PKP left with a large wound on his cheek being covered with a cloth. Indicating, Martial had to do something about that wound.

"What did you even do?"

"Just as I said, I gave him a piece of my mind."

North Korea just hummed and accepted the Filipino's response, heading inside, he heard Martial's voice call him...

"North."

It stunned him for a second, yet he looked back, changing his expression to a stern one.

"Are you sure, You're alright? Your ears were quite red earlier?"

"Y-You Noticed-?"

Hearing the Korean stutter for the first time, Martial couldn't help but widen his eyes and proceeded to laugh.

"What's so funny, Huh?!"

The Filipino continued to laugh infront of the Korean until he could speak again...

"You stuttering is the last thing I expected from you, North."

"What if I stuttered? Its common sense to sometimes stutter!"

"No, No, I think It was quite cute. That you stuttered..."

"What?!!"

From that point on, North Korea was lecturing the Filipino, While Martial only laughed through it all while being chased by an

enraged Korean.

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A loud slap, echoed and shook the whole meeting hall. In the middle of it all, was Del Pilar and Philia, Her hand raised high and an dark expression thatw as accompanied with a glare towards the older.

"Pardon my actions, But, It seems that my hand slipped."

Philia looked around the hall, disgusted by each and every human in it. They were yellow loyalists that she believed to have destroyed her beloved country from the inside.

Philip wasted no time and grabbed his twin's collar, glaring at the female up close...

"How dare you-"

"How dare I? How dare you to question my action as a result of violence? I am merely defending myself!"

The two siblings, seemingly, didn't look like siblings at the moment, more of, enemies that despise and wants to get rid of the other.

"Philip, Step back."

Del spoke, holding his bruised cheek that was slapped by Philia earlier, as a result of him happily insulting their exiled and possibly dead older brother.

"Why would I? Huh?!"

"Its Useless..."

The older warned, clearly seeing that the female's country spirit was slipping out of her body and was solwly creating a suffocating atmosphere aimed to kill.

"Let it go, I'm sure she is only losing her temper."

Del could only glare to the female, who glared back, gritting her teeth.

"Escort Philia to her room."

Philip ordered two soldiers, who entered the room on the height of the argument, releasing his grip on the female's collars. Philip massaged his nose bridge in disappointment, that his twin sister turned out this way.

"No need. I can walk myself to my room."

Philia grabbed her papaerwork, her coat and favorite everyday fan, leaving the room with the two guards behind her, every step of the way...

"Everyone leave."

Del ordered the humans, to which quickly left the room and leaft the two country siblings.

Philip, leaned his back, rather, semi-sat on the edge of the table, present inside the room, still massaging his bridge nose, sighing with an angered expression...

"Are you okay?"

"Am I okay? Kuya, you were just slapped and you're asking me if I'm okay?!"

"Being slapped is an everyday occurence to me since the Philippine-American War."

"Ah..."

Del, then, winced at the pain circulating on his cheek. Seeing that it caused a large red hand print on his face, Philip got a cloth with some alchohol and placed it at his older brother's cheek, to which, made Del wince again at the sudden contact of alchohol.

"Philia has gone to far... I should've exiled her along with Martial, if I had known."

No response waa given as the wound was being treated, until a knock and voice came to the door, that caught their attention.

"Sir, Ma'am Philia has left the building."

"Where did she said she was going?"

Philip replied, a hint of strictness echoed in his tone.

"To His Great Excellency Luzon's House, Sir."

"Good Work, soldier, Keep an eye on her until she gets there."

"Yes, Sir."

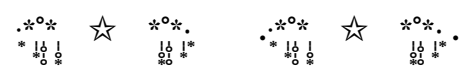
Though, seemingly acting like enemies towards each other, deep down inside, they still care about each other yet putting into wrong actions.

"There, Its fixed. Better let it stay that way until tomorrow."

Philip stated, fixing the cloth on Del's cheek and putting his hands inside his pants pockets. Though, uncomfortable, he always or sometimes wore a *barong tagalog* to express that he symbolizes the Filipino culture, Or sometimes to just impress some.

But the main reason was...

Because he saw Martial wearing the traditional barong everyday to meetings and to international meetups as a symbol of being role model and an inspiration to others, to express and respect ones culture during his period of presidency.



"Your Excellency, We're here..."

Philia turned her gaze to the mansion infront the car she was riding from, stopped. Seeing it had the flag of the Philippines hanged and chasing the wind on a pole, She got off, taking her small shoulder bag and fan, still staring at the large house infront of her.

Humming, She entered the gates, to be welcomed by several servants, who led her to the living room to wait for the person she was expecting to come and welcome her...

"Philia..."

Turning her head, As she heard a male's voice coming her way.

A bright smile formed as she saw the male's figure, she stood up and hugged the male...

"Patawad po Lolo, Ngayon lang po ako nakabisita."

[Apologies grandfather, that I just visited now.]

"Don't apologize, Its normal for you siblings to be busy at this time of year."

Philia had visited Luzon, Their Paternal grandfather.

"Still, Its an obligation for us to visit you at least twice a month."

Luzon only shook his head and smiled towards the female Philippines, Clearly proud and happy that someone had visited him after months from the last visit, yet he could expect this visit as one had visited him much earlier.

"It doesn't need to be an obligation, Philia. I'm not dying anytime soon."

"Ya! Lolo! Wag ka naman ganyan!"

[Hey! Grandfather! Don't be like that!]

"Wag ka'ng magalala. Nagbibiro lang ang tao."

[Don't you worry. I'm only joking.]

Philia looked at Luzon with worry in her eyes, Not wanted to loose their grandfather as soon as they lost their father.

"Now, Now, Don't look at me with those eyes... I can clearly see the resemblance of your mother."

"Really? Do I resemble Inay?"

"Of course... If I remember correctly, You got Perla's looks and personality but with Katipunan's atittude. Philip got Katipunan's looks and Personality but with Perla's attitude... And Martial got both."

Philia froze at the mention of Martial's name. The very thought of her missing her older brother just grew her loneliness when he was exiled to Hawaii every single minute of the day.

Yet the other thought of not having to speak to to Martial after knowing he was still alive, haunted her...

"Is that so..."

Luzon noticed a change of Philia's aura and let the female sit on the couch present after dismissing the servants inside the room.

"I would be breaking my promise, but..."

The Island state spoke, seemingly, taking an envelope from his vest and placing it on the coffee table infro of them. Philia stared at the envelope for a few seconds until she saw and realized the stamp on the seal.

"Martial asked me to give this to you, if ever you visit."

"W-What is this..."

Philia took the letter from the table and ripped in open and grabbed the paper inside. It was like the old times, where they would exchanged letters from place to place just to contact each other.

"Lolo... When did you-"

"Martial visited a while ago, along with a companion and two kids. I had originally thought he was already married, turns out he wasn't."

' Kids...? '

Philia opened the Letter and started reading in a rapid pace, yet with just a few words, tears started dropping from her eyes.

[Dear, Philia.

I doubt, Lolo, would keep his promise and give this to you immediately the moment he sees you... So I wouldn't expect anything.

Anyways, How are you? Though I rarely even open the news to see how all three of you are doing, I could tell that you are having a hard time with all the reporters wanting to know everu single detail you want to be privated.

I apologize for the inconviences I caused you, Philia. I know you have been trying to find my body for years, but hey! you won't need to find it anymore, since I'm still using it... Though, I won't be surprised If you already found me just before the elections next month.

If ever you are wondering, I've teamed up with one of the candidates, though I can't tell who based on our agreement, you're the first to know this. There are reasons why I have hidden myself from public for years, Philia, I hope you understand, why is that.

Before I forget, Congratulations on establishing a close relations to near countries that the US. I'm proud of you for that, must be tough to have oppositions inside the palace when you're all alone, huh?

Not to Worry, If ever there is a chance. I'll come get you from there. But, If I can't.

I'll have to do the very thing I have to, to help you from there.

I hope You'll be able to wait for me. I too hope for your safety and health, Philia.

From Your Eldest Brother, Martial Law.]

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"Which one do you like?"

Martial compared two of the same things, holding two brands yet of the same item near North Korea.

"Isn't both of them the same?"

"No... It's not."

While the two adults were stuck in one aisle inside the supermarket under disguises, The twins were just filling their cart with random biscuits and other essentials.

"We'll just by the both of them!"

"Oi, Are you serious!"

"Why not? It's my treat."

North Korea felt defeated for the first time in his life, watching the Filipino scold the twins, he sighed, gulping the saliva that was stuck in his throat. Liekly to grab the handle of the cart, he accidentally grabbed Martial's hand instead.

"Do you need something, North?"

"Oh... Ah... Sorry-"

Martial said nothing, turning his gaze to the twins, all the while grabbing the Korean's hand to intertwine with his.

"Martial—"

"C'mon, We still have some things more to grab... Bill, Terrie, take charge of the cart."

By this, Martial didn't let go of the connected hands, rather, gripped it more tightly, As they enter another aisle, filled with another type of items.

"I'm sorry if I made you uncomfortable... I just felt like I needed to hold your hand for a moment..."

North korea looked at their intertwined hands and to Martial's faltering embarrassed smile, he sighed once again, gripping the Filipino's hand in return for earlier.

"Then, Take responsibility... And hold it for the whole day."

Martial, of course, was shocked but smiled at the cuteness of a favor or responsibility he had to do.

"Isn't that quite cringey?"

"F*ck cringiness."

"Alright."

Martial giggled at the Korean, as they took and grabbed the things they wanted and needed from the store, before spending the whole day outside and wondering to random places.

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{ Election Night }

"Pa! The votes!"

Terrie pointed at the open television to see the news with the number counts of votes of each presidential candidate. Because of this, Martial lost balance in shock.

His chosen candidate... Won the election in a landslide.

With a voting count of 16 thousand, Rodrigo Roa Duterte became the 16th president of the Republic of the Philippines successing the 15th president...

[To Be Continued...]

Soo....Wanna see a possessive simp?

Wait until I turn one of them to one :3

5. Lonely Memory.

[TW : Mentions of suicide, Cutting oneself, Depression and PTSD(?).]

Standing in such a cold, dark and quiet place. Martial couldn't help but rethink his choices as he held his bag to his side.

Inside a supposed modernized villa, He looked around to see the trees and forests that had covered it. It was just what he needed the most right now, considering, He was just ousted out of his own position in the government through a bloodless revolution, started by his younger brother, Philip.

Due to the cold weather, he would see his breathe make smoke as he breath.

He missed them dearly...

Not the former First Family, But his very own family...

The joyful laughs and happy conversations were no more, as they were too distant because of the division made by the previous wars and political conflicts.

"It does seem... Comfortable..."

Truly, did it seem like that in the first time...

Yet, As time progressed... So did the deadly silence of Martial's Loneliness.

He would stare at the mirror with his reflection for hours, Sometimes talking to himself about how he should've just commited suicide in the battlefield... Then, atleast, some would honor what he had done, but, no...

Wake up, Eat, Go outside for a walk, Eat, Sleep and repeat was his only routine for a span of 3 years, until, he started his abnormality of commiting himself to killing.

The screams of the battlefield, Gunfire, Bombs being set off rang in his ears, ringing continuously as he begged it to stop. Yet, No one was there to comfort him nor calm him down during breakdowns....

Sitting by the edge of the stairs, Martial was there, tear stained cheeks as his eyes went everywhere. Anxiety could be seen from his expression as the sounds of the front lines repeatedly haunted him.

His hands on his ears, tightly cupped as he wanted protect himself from the sounds... yet it was meaningless...

It was like this, until he, himself, was dragged into a point of no return.

In his office, Staring out in the open window, The cold wind coming in, as the frigid metal of the gun, poined at Martial's head. One chamber was full, One pull of the trigger ends it all.

Just One second ends his suffering.

He couldn't feel anything any longer... He was numb for all the scars he had carved onto his skin. His eyes red from all the tears he had shed , He had enough... Martial had enough...

He didn't want to drag himself to a point where he is just waiting for death to come to him.

He was... tired...

Extremely tired of waiting for anyone, everyone or someone.

After all... He would just stay in the category of 'no one'.

"This is it..."

He whispered...

"No one would know... No one would care... And..."

He continued, Slowly pulling the trigger to his head.

' No one would come. '

Slowly... No second thoughts came... No one was there to stop him...

It was him and himself alone, in that large villa.

But then, His hearing went deaf as he felt someone stop him from behind. He felt several hands was on him as he lost consciousness... Martial had used all of his remaining energy to commit that one moment.

All he knew was, Someone had came to stop him.

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"Dad!~ I want to join too!~"

"You already know what would happen if you join, NPA."

Martial explained through the phone, As to, Fixing his things.

It had been several days after the election and since he was the

chosen country representative, He has to move quickly to the Malacanang together with the incoming president-elect.

Yet, With the preseident-elect still choosing not to say his chosen country representative due to their agreement, People had already suspected that it was Philip once again to take office as he has been for the past decades.

"But—"

"No buts, NPA, You join us there and its jail time for you immediately."

"Yeah! Listen to Dad, you spoiled activist."

NDF's voice echoed from the other side of the line, Together with an unaudiable screeching. Martial couldn't help but chuckle, while talking to his eldest children. He was thankful and regretful for taking them in.

Regretful, because he couldn't save them from being influenced by communism. Thankful, because, they are the reason that he was still alive and breathing.

After attempting to commit suicide that one day, The three was convenietly around the area with their troops, escaping the local government and found the hidden villa. The three took it as an opportunity and inspected the house for the safety of their men.

Yet, when they realized that it was their father in one of the rooms, with a gun to his head and was slowly pulling the trigger. They quickly moved and stopped Martial.

Due to the fact that, They saw their father's drained and exhausted state, They had to rush him to a hospital and in order for him to get immediate treatment, The three siblings had to terrorize a hospital.

That was how Martial Law was saved.

"You can watch the inaguration in your phones, Dear."

"It's still different when you're there in person... Shall we go and raid the

inaguration site, brother?"

NPA suggested, Clearly not a good idea for an activist to do.

"You're all on your own, Sis."

CPP voiced over. Martial scurried into putting his essential things onto his lone bag, Knowing he'll be leaving the house he's been for over 3 decades, sounds quite sad, yet, now he won't be leaving alone.

Fully knowing that some would try to kill them, Martial, North and the Twins had to go under cover of their country spirit, just to make it to the Venue, To which was in the Malacanang Palace.

"You have what you need?"

"Yeah... You sure about sneaking into your Presidential home?"

"Don't worry, I already contacted someone there to clear the way of our entrance."

North korea hummed, avoiding the twins that were running through the halls, seemingly playing a game of tag.

"And that is?"

The Filipino only put on a grin, North brushed it off, fully knowing the playful side of Martial, just after being inside his household for a few days.

"Is everyone ready yet?"

Martial shouted so that the playing twins would hear...

"Opo, Papa!"

[Yes, Papa!]

Both the twins shouted back, accompanied with joyful giggles in the background.

"The real question here is; Are ***you*** Ready?"

North Korea looked at the Filipino, Seriousness painted all over his face. Being in Isolation for so long, The Korean knew the feeling of coming out to public after an Isolation period.

Afterall, North Korea isn't called the Hermit Kingdom for nothing.

"I have a mixed feeling, but, I believe I can handle it."

"Right..."

"Are You doubting me?"

"Maybe... But you never know. My mind is my own."

Martial frowned at North's statement, fully knowing that the Korean just copied one of his lines.

He sighed, Taking the Korean's luggage, that was only a small suitcase...

"I'll carry that for you, You can just take the twins to the car outside."

Indeed, did Martial had a car. Well, He rarely uses it, so....

"Stop. You're acting too close to me, Remember, We're only acquintances."

North tightly gripped the handle of his luggage, Stopping Martial from taking it.

"After, Around 2 weeks and you still assume we're acquintances?"

"Why? Is that a problem?"

"Not at all, I just thought we were more than that."

"Huh?"

Martial backed off and gave North a sad smile before going ahead to put his twins and some of their luggage inside the car...

"Friends."

Looking back, Martial stared at the Korean, who seemed to stare down to the floor.

"That's the farthest I can offer."

Widening his eyes, The Filipino laughed;

"Alright then."

"Just Remember that I'm considering this because you saved my life!"

A giggle... North growled and tried to catch up to Martial who giggled at the Korean's "unusual" behaviour.

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"How do I look?"

Philip stared at the mirror, as servants fixed his clothes and attach some medals on his chest, as a sign of great significance to the country.

"Still as youthful as ever."

Del Pilar bluntly stated. Both had worn the traditional Barong Tagalog of their country, For the Inauguration of the new 16th president...

"How about Philia?"

"I believe her servants had told me that she was already ready for the ceremony much earlier than you..."

"Really?"

Philip scoffed at the though that his twin sister may be expecting that she would sit on ***his*** chair.

"What's the point, even, if she goes around expecting the new elect would choose her, when you have the highest probability."

"No need to boast, Kuya."

Truly, Philip had the most votes when it comes to being seated in the country representative seat, yet, in the recent years it has been degrading and his twin's votes had not been changed nor touched and remained the same amount of number.

Del looked over to the door;

"Speak of the devil! You're dressed, rather, well this day?"

"That's none of your concern, Pilar."

It was Philia, with her strict posture and cold tone as she come in the room, with her fan covering half her face.

Del clicked his tongue.

"What is it this time?"

Philip sighed, facing his twin that looked over him with cold, uninterested eyes.

"I wish to reserve three seats in the Inauguration hall... I may have guests arriving late."

"That's not my problem... Go ask the servants to do that."

"I am merely asking, before, you go and say that I did things my way again, without permission."

Philia turned her heel quickly, Taking her ' overbearing ' aura with her.

"Did you restrict her movements again, Kuya?"

Philip glanced to Del...

"I had to. She's been dealing with something suspicious lately."

"Lift that restriction, Del. We can't afford to deal with her."

' Not now, especially, when she has China and Russia behind her back... '

He thought. Philip knew that one day... His sister would over power him, in terms of, Diplomatic relations. His relationship with USA was on a tip of a needle and he is barely holding on it.

He was losing interest...

"What do you mean?! We just let her roam free??"

"Let her be, Kuya. After I get my renewal of term today, I promise to put restrictions later, okay?"

Del sighed at Philip's statement. The two brothers could only trust themselves, yet, both didn't know how to deal correctly with their country problems, that's why they still keep Philia around, even if they considered her an enemy...

Then, A knock came with a servant by the door;

"Your Excellencies, It is time."

Philip and Del looked at each other, nodding, and walking out of the room, with Philip in the lead and Del behind him, as protocol.

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' Well, That was easy. '

Philia thought, walking down the hallways with some of the guests already there and waiting for the ceremony to starts.

Her fan covered most of face, Just as she was taught during the colonial period, It was useful though... For intimidation.

' Now... They should be arriving any minute now. '

Luckily, by the time she looked out the window, The car that her elder brother with his guests had arrived in the back entrance, Philia smiled as she quickly ran to the secret back entrance.

It was the first time in 3 decades that she would be able to meet up with her elder brother, And therefore, she was exhilarated to see him...

"Ferdinio Gonzalo O. Maharlika."

Philia smiled, saying a human name as she slowed down her face by the doors of the back entrance, seeing two human males there standing by the car and two human children, a boy and a girl.

"Miria..."

Hearing her humans name come from one of the human's mouth, with the familiarity of the accent and voice, she couldn't help bu drop what she had and run to hug them.

"Kuya!"

Tightly hugging one of the male while in her countryhumans form, truly did a number on the human and slowly their true cover showed...

"It's Nice to see you again, Philia..."

"You little bastard! Where were you all this time? Why did you take so long? I was so lonely!"

Philia complained as she cried in Martial's arms. The older Filipino couldn't do anything but comfort the female...

"I'm sorry for taking so long..."

"Ahem..."

A cough could be heard from the other Human. Philia wiped her tears and looked at the human, bluntly stating;

"Who the f*ck are you?"

"Philia!"

Martial was taken aback by Philia's sudden curse, well... People cahnge don't they?

Sighing, North Korea removed his Human disguise and glared at the Filipina, that seemed unfazed.

"Ah... You're that country that was in the helicopter accident that I tried to expose a few weeks ago."

"Ha...? Excuse me?"

"You're excused."

Philia couldn't careless if the Korean would glare or whisper curse words at her, all she knows is that her elder brother is back...

"Papa... Who is she?"

One of the children hid behind Martial's leg, staring up to Philia with curiosity in their eyes...

"Papa...? Kuya, You don't mean..."

"Their adop-"

"You had twins with that Hermit??"

Philia pointed at North Korea, Disbelief all over her face as both adult Male stayed silent...

"No..."

A dry answer was given to Philia as the atmosphere went awkward.

Then...

Trumpets started sounding inside, indicating that Philip, Del, the president elect and the out-going president was already starting the ceremony.

They had to hurry, as Martial was only wearing a white polo and he needed or wanted to wear his old military uniform, to which was kept by Philia secretly in her room.

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"So help me God."

16th Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte had just finish his oath of office with the final words of the oath. Hands were offered to clap for the new president as he vowed.

"Where's Philia?"

Philip asked once again to Del, behind his seat.

"She wasn't here the whole time, what's the point of securing three other seats when she's not here?"

"We'll be now proceeding with the country representative, oath of office."

The announcer of the ceremony had announced, taking from their fellow organizers, a booklet, to which would change the course of Philippine History.

Opening it, Many were certain that they would call Philip...

"May we welcome his excellency, the new country representative-"

Stopping midway, The human's eyes widened, seemingly like there was stuck in their throat as they checked with fellow humans. The others too widened their eyes upon reading the name in the booklet...

"What's wrong?"

Philip mouthed to the officials seated at the stage, confirming what was happening. They only replied with uneasy expressions and

shook their heads...

"M-May we welcome his excellency, the country representative..."

Their words stuttered, looking around for the person that they had read in the booklet.

"His Excellency, Martial Law O. Maharlika."

Philip's eyes widened, not only his but everyone. Whispers started pouring in and some had started complaining.

"What is this?!"

Del shouted in anger, right behind Philip.

"Why did you announce a dead sh*t to be the next country representative?!"

"S-Sir please calm down-"

"You can keep up with the tantrum, Del, but I would suggest you stop with your childish actions."

There he was. Martial Law stood wearing the uniform that had terrified and inspired some, Looking the same as he left and disappeared years ago...

"Y-You-"

"Hello, Philip... It has been a long time."

Philip started at Martial's golden eyes, to which only he has one. He couldn't comprehend what he should feel, as he felt his emotions would burst if he spoke even one word.

He could only stare as his hearing went deaf, seeing that his supposed dead brother take oath, of the title he held for so long, the chair he sat for so long and the power and authority he built for so long...

It was to crumble as Martial finish the oath.

*' No... No, No, No, **No!!!** '*

As Philip felt all of his world crumble down, The whole Philippine archipelago has now entered a change into power as the veteran super power had taken seat once again...

It was time for change.

It was time for a history to take a turn...

It was time for a real chestmaster to deal with other chestmasters.

[TO BE CONTINUED...]

6. Repeatance.

With the bells, canons and guns rang to the silence of the afternoon. The inauguration of the 16th president and country representative of the Republic of the Philippines had officially finished taking oath...

And certainly, Didn't it entertain many...

With every step he took inside the room, all eyes were on him as the whispers came running around the quiet room. Martial Law did felt overwhelmed, yet, he was hit with nostalgia at the same time.

"Brother."

Turning to his side, He saw his sister, Philia, holding her signature fan near her face, looking at him with her stern cold face as her eyes glance in another way to point.

"China and Russia, Is It?"

Philia bowed, as to pretending to pay respect, but it was too confirm her brother's guess.

"You may go now."

Martial responded with a whisper as the female scurried away into the crowds of people.

"Martial~!"

Upon greeting the person who called his name, a handshake was offered first as it was returned quickly by him.

"It has certainly been a long time, China."

"Indeed it is! Fascinating that you came back from the dead."

China joked as they took both their hands away. Martial knew that China had become arrogant during these recent years, yet, facing the Chinese now seemed to him as... Exhausting.

"I can assume that, from your tone of voice, you don't want me here, hmm?"

A break of silence colluded with the two countries, until the Chinese laughed loudly.

"My! You haven't change at all, comrade! You are still the same... Martial I knew from the cold war."

He could tell that the Chinese spat something unbecoming of him with that small cut off, from his sentence...

Of course, To fool the public, He had to play along.

"I'm glad you think of me that way."

"Papa..."

Hearing a voice of a child from his below, Martial turned his gaze towards the twins of his pulling his sleeve with worries eyes.

"Oh, Is this your children?"

"Youngests."

"Oh... How Intriguing."

China's gaze had a burning effect that was scaring the twin even more. Bill grabbed on to his father's clothes tightly, holding his sister's hand in an attempt to protect her, yet, both were scared,

nonetheless.

"Please excuse my children, China, It seems they are in need of me."

"Please! Do take care of them ***very well...***"

The Chinese smiled once more and left, leaving some silent remarks about the twins, yet, it was left unheard.

Martial, on the other hand, knelt down to the twins, and checked their well-being, fully knowing the burning stare of the Chinses from before...

"Are you okay? Are you hurt?"

"Papa, I don't like it here..."

Terrie begged with her eyes, slightly trembling with the number of people, seemingly, judging or giving false rumors about the twins.

It was to be expected, Being isolated from the outside world and having no one else to communicate than some communists and their father was far beyond worrying.

"I'm sorry for taking you both here, I really didn't think this through on letting you come... Would you like to leave? I'm going to call a servant to—"

"No!"

The twins whined, both pulling their father's clothes. Anxiety and insecurity was all over their faces as their grip on their father's clothes goes tightly.

Martial just took a few seconds into looking in the children's eyes, until, he took no hesitation and scooped up the twins from the ground and into his arms.

The crowd that had saw this, went silent with shock.

The very scene was certainly mouth shutting, or is that correct? It was the first for everyone to see a countryhuman pick up a child,

Two at that... In public.

"Martial."

Turning his gaze, Martial Saw Philip, his youngest brother, with an angry expression upon his face.

"Philip."

"You do know you are in public, right?"

"Yes?"

"Drop the children and remain professional, please?"

With Philip's tone, He seemed to be forcing himself to be calm at this situation.

"Apologies, but I am a parent and a responsibility of a parent is not to be dropped so easily. Please do understand, Philip."

The twins looked at Philip once and went silent because of the two brothers similar looks yet different flags...

The two brothers had a stare down for a while, until, America came into the picture...

"Hello, Martial and my dear Phil."

Philip, then, showed an uncomfortable expression as his movements rediate another aura.

"America."

Martial forced himself to smile, yet, knows fully well how he doesn't want to get in contact with such a person.

America, then without consent, put down his heavy hand into Philip's shoulder, to which made the Filipino even more uncomfortable at the small space between them...

Even though, they are publicly known as lovers.

"It is nice to see you again, Martial. Especially, after ***that day***."

"Yes, It is quite a long time since then, But, I prefer not to speak of it again?"

"Oh? Can I know why?"

America seemed to be a bit of a brazen by showing off his cunning and ambitious grin of his, all the while, constantly, mentioning the day where he was in 'exile'.

"Hmm..."

"If he doesn't want to, don't bother making him speak."

Philip meddled in, forcefully taking the American's hand off his shoulder with an annoyed look on his face.

"Phil?"

Martial heard Philip click his tongue as he walks away in anger.

"I suggest doing nothing and stay away from his for a while."

Martial smiled again, turning his heel and left the American alone. He took himself and the twins, in his arms, to a rest room near the party hall. He set them aside to a soft couch...

"Can you two stay here for a while? I just need to talk to one more person and I'll come back. Can you two do that for a while?"

He looked at the twins with Pleading eyes, just to get their full attention. Terrie and Bill looked at each other, innocent looks on their faces as they nodded.

"Just come back, Okay?"

"I promise."

Terrie signed a pinky promise with her father before he left and closed the door behind him. As far they both know, they entered a room to which, two bodygaurds were outside and were on standby.

"Papa probably told those two bodyguards to stay and guard the doors entering here..."

"Uhmm..."

The female twin pouted, crossing her arms as she wanted to explore some parts of the palace without anyone's supervision.

"Huh? What is two children doing here?"

Turning to their side, They saw a man with the same flag as their father, yet, with much darker colours, looking at them with confusion upon seeing children.

"Eep!"

The twins shreiked and hid on the couch they were on.

"Oh, Don't worry, I won't hurt you..."

Del Pilar slowly walked closer to the twins, checking if they are indeed a guest's child, and yes, he did confirm it with their attire. Yet, he didn't know whose child they were...

"Hello... "

He peeked from behind the couch, to see a slight resemblance of Martial in them, yet, he ignored them...

' Maybe, I'm just paranoid... '

He told himself...

"What cute children you are... Why are you here when you can make friends on the other room?"

Truly, there was a room designated for the guest's children to go and get along, They also can go to the main hall, yet, all necessities are already provided for them in that one room.

"Papa said to wait for him here!"

Terrie blurted out, causing her twin to cover her mouth in a hurry.

"Oh... Well, Do you want to play? It must be boring here to just wait."

The twins looked at each other in the eye and in Union they said;

"Can you lead us to Ate Philia?"

"Philia? You know her?"

"Yup! Is she someone you know mister?"

"Please call me Del, and, you can say I know her."

The twins fawned over the fact that a stranger knows their "Ate" to which is their Aunt.

"Alright then, But after I lead you to to her, you must come back here. I don't want to be a criminal of kidnapping."

The two siblings giggled and agreed upon this condition. They both held hand with Del, as he led them outside the doors.

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Sitting by the corner of a room, The silence engulfed Philia as she stared down to the carpet of her chamber room. The light shining from her window seemed to not reflect at all, in her eyes.

With her hair let down, It could be seen that the genes she inherited from her mother didn't fail her.

Philia sighed deeply, unknowingly, her clench on her fan became loose as it slid down her dress to the floor...

....

"Philia, How fortunate to meet you in here..."

"It really is quite... Fortunate."

Philia turned and saw her ex-lover, America, standing with a smile on his face and a half emptied cup of wine on his hand, walking towards her as she just left the ceremony hall.

"How are you?"

America started, a sincere tone of his, cringed the female into remembering some things she wished she never heard.

"Fine."

"That's it? There's nothing new with you?"

"What new is there to be specified, when, you have an agent in this palace to record and report everything back to you? Especially, when it concerns Philip?"

Philia coldly answered with a smile on her face.

The US was speechless, drinking from his cup and looking back and forth to the female and to his glass cup.

"I can't deny that."

He chuckled.

That very chuckle made Philia shiver, as she clenched her fist, suppressing any type of emotion she might burst.

*"The real question here is, How are **you** and Philip? I hear **my brother** , almost everyday, complaining about you? Hmm?"*

She shot a question to America. A question that seemed to be mocking...

"Are you mocking me right now, Ms. Philia?"

"It depends on how you interpret my question. I am simply worried for my brother."

"Are you sure you're worried for Philip?"

"Yes, Of course."

Just by then, America frowned at Philia, taking his glassware to the side table present. Walking forwards to Philia and whispered onto her ear;

"It might be late but, I send my condolences to you, Dear Philia."

"What for...?"

"Your recent miscarriage."

...

Philia patted her stomach gently, biting her lip as she held in her tears.

It was almost as if it was yesterday, when she heard of the heartbreaking news... Yet, It had been so long ago.

"My baby..."

Philia whispered...

"Barely a year old... But you already left."

The tone of her voice, heartbreaking and sorrowful. Gently caressing her stomach, the tears that had fill her eyes started going down.

"Was it... My fault? Did I send you back? Was I not... Good enough?"

Choking on her tears, She cupped her mouth to reduce the noise of her sobbing.

"Ate Philia?"

A familiar voice came from behind her door.

Quickly, she wiped her tears and arranged herself in an orderly manner.

"Yes, Who is it?"

Her door came open, To reveal, the twins of her elder brother, Terrie and Bill, Accompanied by her older brother, Del Pilar...

"You two..."

"Ate Philia! This kind mister guide us to you!"

Terrie pointed at Del Pilar, who stood by the doorway, confused at what he was seeing...

"Did he now?"

Philia faintly smiled at the twins, who was close to her lap.

Del Pilar stood stunned, The past seemed to shine upon the faint smile of his sister. The image of his late mother seemed to overlap with his present sister's looks.

"Ma...?"

"Ate Philia! The garden is so large! Larger than what we have back home!"

"Terrie! Get down from there!"

Terrie and Bill, The twins, seemed to argue. The female twin had climbed on the window as the male twin tried to pull her down.

"Now, Now, You two... What are you doing here, Really?"

Philia carried Terrie in her arms, like she was experienced, and put her down on her lap, patting Bill's head gently...

"Ate, Can we let Kuya here, join us in the garden down there?"

Bill requested, Terrie agreed with a squeal.

Philia, though having a complicated relationship with Del Pilar, looked at him awkwardly...

"Will you... Join?"

"Well... If you insist."

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"I'd rather you not leave though..."

Martial whined, seemingly joking around the conversation.

"Why? You want me to be held a prisoner here?"

North Korea held his brow high, disgusted by the chattering guests invited.

"If you want~"

"Stay away from me."

"Don't worry, I promised to find a way and I did."

North Korea tilted his head, a doubtful look on his face.

"You don't believe me, do you?"

"Well, hardly anything here is believable..."

"True... A private plane would come in later this evening, I contacted your government through China, They'll be picking you up under radar."

Surprised by the constant information, the Korean had no time to process and could only agree...

"A-Alright... If you say so..."

"That gives us atleast... 5-6 hours?"

Martial stared directly back to the Korean, who still hasn't finished processing the sudden information he bought in and was only staring into space.

"I will leave? This evening?"

"Correct."

"Immediately?"

"Why? Do you want to stay for more longer?"

A silence was brought upon themselves. Both kept their mouth shut on this question...

"Anyways, Since you are leaving early tonight... Shall we leave this useless party to, at least, spend your last remaining time here?"

Martial suggested, offering his hand to North with a smile on his face...

"Why not?"

The Korean gladly took his hand and they both secretly escaped the hall. The two of them escaped the halls of Malacañang to the back garden connecting to the Pasig River.

"Should we even be back here?"

"Relax~ no one comes here often. And, It's closed off to anyone that the first family, so we're fine."

"Should I be allowed in here?"

"You're asking too much questions, North. Come here."

The Filipino signalled as North Korea ran towards his side as they watch the quiet flow of the River from behind the presidential palace.

"Quiet, isn't it?"

"Not really..."

"C'mon, Just agree with me."

"No, I won't and I'll never."

Martial sighed and took one step backward...

"Why are you stepping backwards?"

"Nothing important."

North Korea hummed in response.

"Say North, What would you say if I hug you right now?"

"What the f*ck are you talking about?"

"I am in need of a hug, mind giving me one?"

North Korea was officially confused, onto why the Filipino was acting this way than normal...

"Okay...?"

Martial chuckled as the two hug... Yet, what North Korea didn't know was the intention behind this hug that Martial wanted...

As soon as they hugged, Martial, who was taller that the Korean, lowered his head onto North's shoulder, like what anyone would do with a normal hug... But, As soon as he knew North Korea would get comfortable...

Martial opened his mouth...

And, took advantage of North Korea.

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"Martial?!"

North Korea felt a sting, rather, a small bite on his ear, to where, Martial turned his head on.

"Shh~ You don't want anyone to hear you, now would you?"

The Filipino whispered into the Korean's ear, followed by a low chuckle.

"Be a darling and stay quiet for me~"

The hug tightened as Martial's grip strengthen, adding more closeness to the two... This didn't help, now with Martial's wings out and covering them both from sight...

"Mar— Ngh..."

North Korea let out a tiny sound, as he felt something wet go around his ear lobe, whilst, going down to his neck...

"I've noticed..."

Martial's voice echoed...

"You've been advancing towards me this past few days, yet, I kept quiet..."

"What are you— S-Stop..."

"It was cute... Quite adorable, to say the least~ And truly, Alluring."

The Filipino marked the Korean's neck. His teeth going through North's Neck, made the Korean to let out another sound...

"Ugh!~"

A hickey was formed, as Martial caressed it with his thumb, a grin was formed on his lips as he heard the silent panting of his

partner...

"Did you like that? Or shall I give you more?"

The Filipino stated putting his hand on the Korean's waist, secretly.

North Korea flinched at the sudden contact and burried his head onto Martial's shoulder, trembling...

"Why now? Out of all times you saw me make advancements, Why?"

Martial once again chuckled;

"It was so cute to see you trying, while I, go about oblivious."

"You f*cking maniac—!"

"Hush now~ I might make another move and I might overdo myself."

"Stop teasing me, You Psychopath!"

By this, North Grabbed Martial's collars and began sucking onto his neck, just like what the Filipino did to him.

Martial released a low grunt as he felt the Korean's lips upon his skin, sucking on a specific spot he finds sweet...

Then, It hit them both...

They were doing this in broad daylight.

Outside. Of the Malacañang Palace. In the Gardens by the River, where the other side was a city filled with people...

It was only a miracle that they were both covered by Martial's large wings, to tell what they were previously doing to each other...

North pulled out of what he was doing, to only be trapped in the Filipino's embrace.

"Let me go."

"No."

"We are in broad daylight, outside."

"What about it? Let them go in their way, We were having a moment here."

"If someone recognizes me, I'll be dead even before I get back to my country!"

"Shall I make you understand the meaning of No?"

"Martial—!"

Startled, North Couldn't move a single one of his muscles and it seemed like it was being sucked away from him.

His wet cavern was being explored by the one who was Infront of him, forcefully. Martial had forced them into a deep kiss as he explore the Korean's mouth, to which weakened him slowly...

North's hands and body was being stopped from moving by Martial's own. It was all planned and the Filipino had dominated him for that moment...

' S-Shit... I can't move... It's too... Entrancing...'

North Korea though, completely surrendering all hope of freedom.

The two stood there inside the wings of Martial, hiding from te sights of the people around them, Formally surrendering each other's fate to themselves...

But...

"Papa?"

The small voice of a child, startled both of their moments.

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"Philip."

As Philip turned around, He saw a face he hasn't seen for quite a while...

"Japan, How nice to see you, again."

"Philip, This isn't the time for nostalgia, You are in serious trouble."

Japan stated, a desparate expression was plastered on his face as he huffed.

"C'mon Japan, This is a party not a meeting for you to be serious."

"Philip!"

Philip didn't listen as he was already drunken with wine, despair to know that he wasn't the country representative...

"The records of your affairs with men and women were bought to America's desk and is likely to end up on you brother's as well!"

"What's the use of them knowing? There's nothing they can do anyway!"

"Philip! This can be sent to the UN and you'll loose your right being a country representative and you'll be replaced by your twin sister, Philia."

The Filipino country stopped in his tracks, and stared at the Japanese. A glare came dawned on his face, angry at the situation...

"Replace? Never! She doesn't have a right!"

"Exactly, So, we need to fix this now!"

"Who delivered the report?"

"Probably one of his agents here, I have already sent your palace Garuda to track them down."

"Thank you."

Now, You're probably wondering why Japan here is helping Philip, with his... Immoral doings...

Well, It is simple actually...

Japan was one of them.

[TO BE CONTINUED...]

" *Lord forgive me for writing the last part while listening to worship songs(hillsongs.) "*

- Author
(A first timer in writing smut, to which wrote several smut FICS that they deleted later on because they couldn't handle writing smut without squealing/screaming too much.)

7. A Painting of Secrecy.

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"Del... Del."

Coughing up blood, Del Tightened his grip around his father, whome was shot and was severely injured by the war...

"T-Tay... Malapit na po tayo, Sandali nalang."

[F-Father... We're almost there, Just a little more.]

Del Pilar's voice hitched, Trembled as he felt his father's weight become more heavy with each passing moment. Katipunan's consciousness was going dark with each step he knew his son was taking him, By his shoulder, He knew that Del was trying all his might and energy to get him somewhere safe and can be healed, but...

It was too late...

He was already loosing a lot of blood from the wound by his side, and medical help is so unreachable to get him there on time."

"Del... Tama na..."

[Del... Stop...]

"Hindi. Ayoko mawala pati ikaw, Itay. Nauna na si Inay, Ayaw ko na maranasan ulit yung sakit na iyon. "

[No. I don't want to lose even you, Father. Mother went on first, and I dont want to experience that again.]

Katipunan once again coughed up blood, His weakened state was already sign of his ticking clock, coming to an end.

"Del..."

Del Pilar kept going, despite the injury on his leg from the battle, they had fought earlier, The young Filipino general kept grasping even to the tiniest of hope.

"Del, Bitawan mo na ako."

[Del, Let me go.]

"Hindi. Ayoko. Malapit na tayo sa pagamutan, Itay. Maililigtas pa kita..."

[No, I won't. We're near the clinic/hospital, Father. I can still save you.]

Tears weld up Del' s eyes as he could lie to some extent, Yet, Not like this... He didn't want to lose anyone else...

His siblings were no where of sight, expected of them to not be, Especially Philip. Yet, He wanted help from them... Even from his Older Brother, Martial. He would know what to do in this situation, yet, where was he? when their own beloved father is dying beside him?

"Del, Huwag ka nang magpilit pa... Huli na ito para sa akin."

[Del, Don't force it any longer... This is the end for me.]

Katipunan lets go of Del, falling to the ground as his eyes went colourless.

"Tay!"

Del looked at his Father's state, It had worsen. Katipunan was barely breathing and Del could hear footsteps nearby, He didn't know what to do anymore.... He was scared, Terrified of what their enemies would do to them in this weak state.

"Tay! Tay. Please... D-Don't!"

The young General shed tears for his beloved father, Panicking as his trembling hands took leaves to put in his father's wounded area, as well as ripping some of his clothes to add to the pressure...

Del, was barely even at the age of adolescence, and he's facing death at every inch of his life. Even infront of him was death... of his own father.

"Del... Alagaan mo sarili mo, Ha?"

[Del... Take care of yourself, Hm?]

"Tay... Hindi... Hindi ito Pwede..."

[Father, No... This cannot be...]

Katipunan could no longer see as the light in his eyes went away, His breathing slowed too much as he used his final strength to hold his son's hand and smile... One Last time...

"Martial... Philia, Philip... Patawarin niyo ko."

[Martial... Philia, Philip... Forgive me.]

"Tay...? Tay?!"

Del shouted, Shaking the body of his father, whose strength dropped intensely to the ground. The Young General checked his fathers wrist for

any pulse... None.

"No... No, No, No! No! Tay!!"

Shaking uncontrollably, Del lowered his head to the ground, tears would come out of his eyes unceasingly. His chest was so heavy as his feelings get mixed up all over the place...

"Ahh!!"

He screamed in frustration. Pain was in his tone.

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Del stared down on his hand, A rusted necklace of a cross laid on his palm... Turning it around, A carved phrase on it;

"Natus est unus, unus abit. Vivat Mortalis Qui in morte vivit... "

A Latin phrase behind the cross, Del Knew that during the spanish period that they were forced to learn Latin phrases for religious purposes. Yet, even to that point, some latin cannot really be understood by their understandment by it.

"Sir...?"

Looking to his side, Manila stood by the door, holding his usual clip board and glasses.

"Manila, What are you doing here?"

"His Excellency had asked for you."

Upon realising this, Del clenched his teeth, knowing that it wasnt Philip that was calling him... But, His Damned older brother of a traitor... At least that is what he sees him.

"What does that Tyrant want?"

His tone changed from polite to disgusted as he looked out the window, seeing his own reflection. The cross necklace being clenched on his fist.

"He wishes to discuss something with you. I would suggest to answer his call."

"Manila, You saw everything back then right?"

Del reminded...

"I cannot deny that."

"Then, Why are you seemingly taking his side in this?"

Manila looked at him, dead in the eyes...

"I am not taking sides, Sir. I am merely doing my job as the capital city."

The Capital city was unaffacted, despite the menacing aura Del gave away, The City was unaffected. Despite just being a City, Manila had been the head servant and caretaker of the Malacanang palace since it was built, after Cebu, Intramuros, Malolos and a list of others failed to keep the title of Capital City intact to themselves.

"Fine..."

Del was unimpressed as he made Manila lead the way for him, as always... He was led to the same room, to which, he would meet Philip on certain occasions, but now it wasn't his younger brother behind these doors...

But His, presumebly, Dead older brother, whom he calls a tyrant or dictator, to which, he was.

"Your Excellency, Sir Del Pilar has arrived."

He heard Manila calmly state, as a voice answered;

"Let Him In."

Before the doors could open, Del clicked his tongue, appearing to be annoyed and arrogant to the presence of the current highest person in the country. The Filipino General entered as the doors shut behind him quickly with the servants outside as well as aids and

assisstants, leaving the two brothers inside.

Del Pilar saw Martial behind the desk of the country representative, which angered him;

' What right does he have, to sit in that chair? '

He thought, Until Martial's voice came in;

"I'm surprised that you accepted my call."

His older brother didn't even bother to look as him and continued to review and write something on papers and stamp them with the presidential seal.

"What do you want? I don't have this much free time, You Know."

"I know. I won't be taking that much time from you."

Looking closely to Martial, Del noticed that the older was wearing a silver type glasses as he assess every document that passes by in his hand like magic and gets done of review.

"Since when do you wear glasses?"

Del's thoughts were blurted out. Both of them stopped for a minute and looked at each other, He covered his mouth immediately as Martial let out a chuckle, close to laughing, as he did rarely get any comments like that due to his reputation.

"Just a few years back, after... Anyways."

' He didn't tell... Is it a secret that deep, that you refuse to say? '

"I recieved a report that you manage the Palace while Philip is not around?"

Martial rested his chin on both his hands, looking at his brother. An innocent smile on his face as he drop his documents to the desk...

"Yes, Why do you ask? I managed it better than you ever did—"

"I know, I know, No need to rub it all to my face, Unsightly."

"So?"

"I just have one question before you can go on your way, Del."

Martial's tone seemed sweetly poisonous in Del's persepective, as it gave off a sweet yet deadly tone...

"Go on w-with it."

Del Stuttered, though he saved it by keeping it hidden.

"So, Philip goes out in the middle of work, withour any prior meetings nor appointments by the officials and he just goes out without any assigned escorts..."

Somehow, The young general seemed threatend and uneasy. The current air suffocated his air ways of his lungs, His ears listened attentively as well as his gaze towards his older brother... He hadn't felt this way since The War of Independence.

"So, Where does Philip go in these times?"

Though, Martial seemed calm, In Del's perspective, He was menacingly terrifying. With the Former Dictator's face all blackened with only his eyes glowing gold, Staring with a sinister aura into his eyes like it was waiting to prey to his soul...

"I suppose you know?"

He couldn't speak... It was too terrifying in his case to even muster any words to say. It was like... another being was infront of him, pretending to be his older brother.

"I-I...."

"I...? What? Do tell me."

"I don't... "

He felt like vomitting whatever he ate. Everything. He wants to let it all out with all the fear going inside his body... Like darkness was coming to him and taunting his whole being.

"You Don't... Hmm, How disappointing."

Del felt stiff, He was trembling in fear as he clench his fist more, Slightly tearing his flesh as blood dripped from it. Even the expected words that came out of Martial's mouth came to him like an order from a higher superior...

It frightened him to his soul.

The Pressure was intense. He felt eyes on him, multiple of them, even if they were just the only ones in the room. His brother's golden eyes were not to be underestimated. It was the most feared eyes back in the 1800's, during the spanish colonization period up to the end of the Marcos Era, even until now, some still fear it.

It was like Death was preying for your soul's light.

"I-I'm So—"

"Brother! Your Country Spirit is Killing half our servants!"

Philia barged in, seemingly like in pain as her hand was near her neck, being suffocated. She looked at Martial with pain, yet, when her eyes landed at Del, it turned to anger.

"Kuya! Si Kuya Del naapektuhan ng masyado!"

[Brother! Del is being affected too much!]

Grabbing her older brother, Del, She hugged him by letting him lean on her shoulder and glare at her eldest brother, Martial. The Female couldn't just let Del go after seeing his pale white face from fear, despite their conflicts and misunderstandings.

Finally, Martial snapped out of being out of control, He looked at his two siblings infront of hi and immediately helped Philia depite her shouting at him.

"Del? Del! Del, Wake Up!"

Was all Del Pilar could hear before he passed out from the sudden change of atmosphere.

Walking in a lonely, dim lit hall, Del Pilar found himself looking at an old painting on the wall. Spider webs on the sides, scratches on its frame, yet, the painting itself was a mystery...

A man dressed in a somewhat ancient european robes that barely covered their chest, golden accessories simply laid in their body like everyday linen of clothes. A white veil covering their face showing only their lips, A long straight golden hair that surpassed even their hips... All in all, It wasn't an ordinary painting...

He kept quiet, Staring endlessly into the painting... One part caught his eye.

The transparent veil, slightly showed the man's eyes...

Gold...

Like Martial's, Philip's and Philia's eyes...

Why?... Why wasn't he given at least one eye with golden colour. Why was he given black and red instead? Why not Gold like his siblings? Was he even part of the family?

Wasn't gold their family trait?

Was he... even a child in this family?

Then, who is he really, if not?

Yet, Upon these thoughts, Light shone by another painting beside this.

A woman.

Curious, He walked to its front and was bewildered by the woman's beauty.

Silver flowing silk hair, Like spider webs, shining within the painting. Sharp features on her nose, eyes and lips, a slender body, with matching pre-colonial clothing with the golden necklaces and bracelets... Yet what Del Pilar was shocked the most was;

"Dark... Eyes. My eyes... "

He whispered.

The woman had exactly his black eyes. But who was she? She doesn't even appear to have a flag, yet, she looked like a country, A kingdom perhaps. Her clothes resemble the clothing of their country before the spaniards came, yet, No records were held of another kingdom than those recorded by the Laguna copperplate inscriptures.

Beyond those records, Del felt familiar and close to this woman... Like He had seen her before, touched and even spoken to her before... Yet, He had never met her in his whole entire life.

"Who... Who is she?"

Shaking, He held out his hand and touched the painting, He felt his heart beat loudly, that it rang inside his ears voluntarily. He heard a whisper;

' The Last Scion of My Blood. '

Jolting awake, Del gasped for air as he looked above the room from his laying position...

"What... Where—"

"Del Pilar! Thank God you're awake!"

Looking to his side, He saw Philia taking a wet cloth from a silver

bowl and sqeezing it dry.

"Philia? What are you doing here?"

"Am I not welcome to care for my brother, who collapsed and never woke for the past 3 hours?"

3 Hours? What was she talking about? Del was exactly unconscious for the maximum of 3 hours, due to the sudden change in the air, his body couldn't take the sudden removal of the pressure put onto his body by Martial's country spirit, that was reported to have taken control of Martial for a few minutes and went berserk with Del inside the room.

"3... Wha-"

Suddenly, He remembered what he just saw. Del looked up to see a woman's figure standing upon the reflection in the glass frame of one of the pictures on top of the cabinet. It stared at him for a second and completely disappeared when he turned to look at what was reflecting it... Nothing.

"Kuya Mar called for all of us for Dinner later. He said no exceptions but you, until you wake up."

"Me? Why the hell would he even say that, I doubt that call is even sincere."

"Its up to you to respond or not, But I know Kuya Mar. When he calls, *We* answer."

Philia emphasized greatly, arranging some of the flowers on the vase, near the couches inside the chamber, before heading over to the door...

"I don't expect you to have at least a bit of gratitude towards this gesture, But, at least give some respect to the one who basically raised us all since Itay's death."

The Filipina headed out quickly, closing the doors of Del's room.

"Respect? Respect my ass... Where was he even during those times?

Itay died beside—"

"...*Patawarin niyo ko."*

[...Forgive me.]

"—me..."

Sighing deeply, He still hadn't moved on from that one memory. Now that his older brother is here... again... He doesn't even plan on forgiving him on what he did when Katipunan was in his death bed.

"Nasaan ka ba noon kaylangan tayo ni Itay? Wala! Wala ka noong namatay si Itay, kaya't hindi mo malalaman ang pakiramdam ng anak nang nakita mamatay ang kaniyang Tatay!!"

[Where were you when father neede us the most? Nowhere! You weren't there when Father dies, That's why you will never know the feeling of a child that saw their own father died!!]

He could still remember the day he said those words to Martial, His reaction and response was what came off his grudge towards the older.

"Ganoon ba..."

[Is that so...]

"Ganoon ba? Ganoon ba?! Kuya, Namatay si Itay at Iyon lang ang reaksyon mo? Kuya, si Itay ang namatay—"

[Is that so? Is that so?! Brother, Father died and that is your only reaction? Brother, Father is the one that died —]

"Ano gagawin ko? Umiyak? Del, Nasa Giyera tayong lahat, wala akong oras para umiyak."

[What am I supposed to do? Cry? Del, We all are at war, I don't have time to cry.]

Del clenched his fist his anger, looking angrily upon his brother, taht had left the room with other commanding revolutionary officers of the war.

This is where Del's change of heart had began towards his older brother.

Little did they all know, that all of them had other perspectives.

[To Be Continued...]

8. Family.

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Walking through the quiet halls of Malacañang Palace, Philip found himself wondering;

Where in god's name is everyone?

Yes, It was quiet as it should be. But, It was too quiet to even begin to compare... Was he hallucinating? He really can't remember the time he could roam Malacañang freely like this since he was appointed country representative several times in the past.

Then, Came Manila by the corner.

"Manila!", Philip called out.

"Ah, *Kamahalan*. What can I do for you?"

Manila replied, his arms seemingly stumbling upon a fat envelope filled with documents needed to be delivered down to the senate.

"What is that?"

"Oh, These are the new executive orders handed out by His

Excellency earlier today."

The capital city smiled nervously. Philip could see in Manila's face that he had these large round black bags around his eyes as he looked a bit dehydrated...

"Is he overworking you, Manila? It has only been days since he was appointed and he's already abusing his power!"

"Goodness, Philip. No! In fact, I haven't had such little work in years!"

"What?"

Manila fumbled his fingers in excitement, Scurrying to find something inside the envelope he held.

Afterward, The capital handed him a piece of paper.

"And this is?"

"Read it!"

Philip could see that Manila was exhilarated. In hesitation, He read the paper shoved onto his hands...

"In accordance to... A month off?!"

"Isn't that news! I only requested to his excellency a 2 days off yet, he gave me a whole month!"

Philip couldn't speak, as he was confused on how to feel about this. Should he cry? Be happy? Angry perhaps?

"Ah well, I have wasted your time, *Kamahalan*. I shall deliver this to the senate now, Please refer to Quezon for now. He would be my substitute for a while. Farewell for now!"

"Ah, Wait..."

Just before Philip could tell Manila what he wanted, The Capital city disappeared from his sight.

He wasn't certainly mad nor happy. Just relieved that his capital city finally got the vacation he always yearned and deserved. After being appointed as the direct and permanent capital city, Manila never really had any rest nor day offs, always being forced to work and sacrifice his health for the wellbeing of the whole country, better yet, the reputation of his metropolitan cities.

Sigh, Philip released his thoughts through a sigh as he continued walking forward, until, he reached the garden that he made in commemoration of his late parents...

Subsequently, He heard a child's laugh.

"Terrie! Get down from there!"

Another child's voice came...

"No way! Its so beautiful up here!"

"You're going to get yourself killed!"

Just what is..., Peeking around the tall bush corner, Philip saw two children with blazing crimson red hair. A boy stood below a tree trunk looking up to a girl, who sat on top of a branch.

"Children? What are you two doing here, unattended?"

They looked familiar. Yet, not in a way that he could recognize them.

"Ah! Ate Philia turned into a boy!"

Philia? , Philip was taken aback, looking down to the boy. This little boy reminded him of himself, yet, His look upon a country such as him was not normal.

Children would normally cry or laugh at the sight of a

countryhuman, curious at some point. But, never draw a glare towards them with some sparks of countryhuman spirit behind them.

"Who are you? Why are you trying to impersonate Ate Philia?"

The boy demanded, glaring to Philip, as if threatening the country, who has seen this type of threats in the past...

"Hmm. The true question here is, Who are the two of you, dears? I never heard of guests letting their children roam around like this."

Philip slowly turned his gaze towards the girl on the tree. The Filipino's gaze pointed at her like a glare with a sharp knife towards her eyes. Yet, The girl was unfazed...

"Bill! He might be Ate Philia's twin! Don't you remember she said she have a twin that looks like her!"

The little one shouted down to her brother. Philip was impressed that both children knew of this knowledge and was completely unfazed with his small attack with country spirit...

"Bill! Terrie! Where are you, my dears?"

Philip then heard Philia's voice in the distance. He turned to look at the direction of the voice to see Philia as shocked as him to see each other at the same place.

"Philip."

"Philia."

Philia only nodded her head, and proceeded to pick up the male child from beside Philip, Looking up to the girl on the high branch.

"Come down, Terrie."

"Ah.."

"I'll catch you."

Philip watched from the side, yet was constantly being attacked by his consciousness, seeing that his sister was already carrying a child and was attempting to catch another one in her arms.

"Philia..."

"What?"

"Don't. Just don't."

Philip gently let his sister's arm down...

"I'll do it. You're going to fall to the ground if you catch her with another one in your arms."

Philip, though taller than Philia for a few inches, Caught the child in his arms, and was perfectly fine.

"Thank you... I guess."

Philip said nothing as he let the child down to the ground. He doesn't even know whose child he just rescued, but, His consciousness was congratulating him for something so simple...

"Whose children are these, to roam without a single servant attending them?"

"Kuya's. Their Kuya Martial's youngest children."

"Ah..."

"I suppose we should part ways now. I have to let these two back into the Palace, under Kuya's order."

Then, They left... Why? Why was everyone leaving him alone so soon.

Staring forward at Philia's back, They walked away very quickly.

But, he saw the little girl he rescued wave goodbye at him for a moment, A smile upon her face as Philip waved back. She disappeared as soon as she put down her hand to her side...

Still holding a wave sign, Philip slowly flipped his hand, A sad expression upon his face.

Yearning? Loneliness? I thought I had forgotten these things long ago..., Philip reminisced the time he held his own child only to end up to a catastrophic end.

" Father! Why? Don't you love me anymore? I'll try to be better, Just don't send me away! Please! Father! Father! "

The cries of his child being taken away was too much for him to bear that it still haunted him to this day, until his child became an independent country with his other siblings. Taking out a locket from his pockets, A broken clock dispalyed from the side as an old picture displayed of a family to the other side.

"Forgive me... I hope you understand why I did what I did. My precious children."

There an old picture of the younger him, Twins, A male and a female child stood beside each other as they stand infront of a male older than them for a few years stood behind them, All the while a child, rather, infant, sat on his lap whilst a male toddler was reaching out to the said infant.

Philip caressed his finger on the picture, One by one from the oldest child in the picture to the youngest, he whispered;

"Palau, Guam, Mariana, Micronesia and... Marshall."

All five were his biological children, yet, each one, was taken out of his hands, forcibly by colonizers. Philip hadn't seen them since...

"Quezon? Earth to Quezon?"

"Ah! Yes, Your excellency?"

Martial chuckled seeing that his temporary aide already his mind somewhere else...

"Are you alright? I know this is quite-"

"No! No... Its alright. I'm just surprised that Manila took a month off so suddenly."

"I was actually the one who gave him a month off. He only requested two days."

Quezon city gave a low *'Oh'*, focusing back at the little paperwork left by Manila earlier as he ran out the door with a giddy aura. He handed Martial the papers needed for signing and took whatever it is he already reviewed and revised.

"Sir, May I ask a question?"

"Go on."

Hesitant, The city looked at the time and back to Martial, observing his very movements and characteristics of his persona. Truly, This was the closest he had gotten to meet the country representative, as normal cities such as him, need to have permission from their local goverment, the Capital City, namely Manila, and the country representative himself.

"Sir, I have noticed that... You and the other masters are not close as all have presumed you all to be?"

At that moment, Martial just felt to stop his writing and stare at the document below his hand and pen. He slowly remembered all he had done and winced his eyes in the pain of it flooding his mind all at the same time.

"Your Excellency?"

"Things happened. That is why..."

With that, The country continued what he was doing and passed the last document to Quezon. The city doesn't seem satisfied with his answer, but never bothered to ask again as it would only mean he was digging close into a history that he shouldn't meddle in.

"Is there anything more to my schedule?"

"Yes, Your Excellency. Its... the dinner that you had called for the masters."

"Quezon, First of all, We are not in the past. Please refrain from calling anyone 'master' instead call them with sir or lady, is much proper. And second, Call my other children to dinner."

"As you wish, Your Excellency."

"Good. I shall go now, I still have to go somewhere."

"Let me come with you!"

"No, Stay here and do what I told you to do. I'm going to come back in a short while."

Martial took his jacket and proceeded to walk out the door of the presidential office, leaving Quezon dumbfounded;

Is this how Manila deals with Sir Philippines sometimes? No wonder he's sleep deprived , He thought deeply...

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Del Pilar stared at the mirror infront of him, Intently thinking of what he saw earlier.

A woman? Who was she even?, He scratched his head in frustration that he ruined his perfectly styled mane.

"Agh... I have to style this again."

He groaned, attempting to fix his ruined hairstyle unless he would walk to dinner with a bird's nest ontop of his head, That would be embarassing would it?

"How do you-"

He stared into the mirror once again, Stopping at once as he saw the woman again in the mirror staring at the corner of the room. Alarmed, Del immediately tuned to the corner to see no one and back to the mirror again, to see that the female hadn't disappeared yet.

"Just who-"

"Before I answer your question, Have you ever questioned why?"

Stunned, Del Pilar widened his eyes, seeing that this woman was also staring to him through this mirror. A veiled face covering everything but her dark eyes emitting a silver glow.

"Have you questioned yourself, why were you so different than others?"

"What?"

Like a glitch in the matrix, The woman appeared behind him suddenly. By real life, there was nothing behind him, but in the mirror, everything seemed to become a false reality. Dark fog stared to form and blind him of the scenery of the room as the woman was still there, head down...

"Ever questioned... why you're the only one without the golden eyes of the Ophirians?"

"Ophirians...?"

"Yes, Ophirians. Our Lost Ophirians."

"What are you... Why? Aren't I a Maharlikan and Ophirian?"

Then a cold sensation touched Del's hand making him flinch. The poor male wasn't ready for the cold touch of the unrealistic figure, until it disappeared from his hand. He watched the woman from the mirror, go infron of him, as if trying to face him...

And suddenly, Her hand seemingly passed through the mirror to touch his face. Del wanted to step back, yet, was paralyzed. The

hand soon touched his cheek, coming with the words;

"Oh, My child... Soon you'll understand."

"Who..."

Then, like a blindfold, something covered his eyes, as it was followed with the words;

"Why we were angered by those golden eyes."

Just who... are you, Del felt a change of feeling, he felt... yearning, worry and absence of something that seemed important. Following a short period of darkness, he figured out the his eyes was covered with a hand when it was being taken off of him.

Staring once again in the mirror, He saw nothing but him and... Martial.

"Are you okay?"

"Why...?"

He gripped his fist and glared at Martial, who was beside him...

"Why?!"

"What do you mean why? Any more longer than that and you could've died! Do you understand what I am saying?"

"I was to learn what I was truly am and you stopped me to!"

"That wasn't a good sign Del. She was going to devour your curiousity and use you for her sake!"

Del Pilar looked at Martial for a few seconds before opening his mouth once again...

"You... You could see her too?"

Martial didn't repond but showed a hesitation in his expression. Angered by this, Del shoved him aside as he hurreidly stomped out the door, slamming it shut.

Martial flinched at the sudden slam, but still remained in the room looking down. He put his hands on both his pockets and looked over to the mirror.

"Have you had your fun yet?"

"Oh, No, Child. Unless you tell everyone what had happened, There is none to save."

"I suppose then. But haven't you made a deal with Ophir back then? Fulfill your promise."

There was no reflection but his, but the voice seemed to answer his questions. Yet, at this point, the voice didn't answer.

"Aren't you also my descendant? Why turn against me?"

"Like you said long ago... I may have inherited the Ophirian's gold eye but Violence would always be in my blood, wouldn't it? "

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"Isn't she..."

"Shh! We don't talk about that here!"

"But it's true right?"

Standing in the center of a crowd, traditional clothes here and there, a social gathering filled with nothing but vixens, gossipers and crocodile tears. Philia stood amongst these said people, trying not to break in any way...

"Shh!"

"Miss Philia?"

Looking down, she could only see a gloved hand infront of her, asking her to come and take it. She looked up in surprise, many have already heard rumours of her being a shadow for the Spanish Empire, it was true, but none has ever seen her work nor is ever been confirmed by the public...

"Ah..."

"Oh, my apologies. United States, or you may call me America."

Philia could see the stares go about, she knew if she spoke even a singe word she would be branded as something dispicable, She didn't want that... especially to this gentleman infront of her that only wants to offer her a dance.

She remained steadfast and covered her face with a fan, observing the male's reaction to her action. He was... confused?

"Is it a yes or no?"

Who even is this, to not understand that I do not want to?, She though very deeply, yet, even if her thoughts are like that, she really wanted to take that hand. Even if she was a poised and idealastic maiden, she was still a child yearning for everything, right?

"Sir US. I believe forcing an answer from a lady is quite... impulsive."

Another guest had answered for her, looking at her as if she was a... harlot, of some kind.

"Is that so... Then, may I take this empty seat here? I would love to have a small chat with you."

He then took the seat right beside her, as he sat, the scenery changed. Philia sat on a chair, alone, her hands trembling, as she placed them, fist tightened, on her lap. A doctor seemingly reviewing her tests infront of her, as a hesitant look go back and forth from his eyes...

"So? What are the results?"

"I'm terribly sorry, Ma'am Miria."

"What?"

Seemingly, All she could hear was ringing, Her doctor's voice and the sound of her heart thumping so loud.

"Your child... We're very sorry for your loss."

"N...No. It can't be."

As Philia was about to scream and cry, She found herself in another scenery again. This time she could not feel a single thing but helplessness and anger. Watching from the far side in the corner, Her very engagement was just broken off and was replaced by the one she didn't want to believe on.

Decades on a false hope, a false reality. She couldn't even start to think, what is she to mourn on? herself? Her engagement? Her child? Her family? Everything seemed so pointless at this point. Why bother feel anything when everything would just make you feel dull and shameful.

"Philia. Don't let them get in your head."

Even her older brother had to see her slow progression to recovery, but, even if she looked fine, she was never going to recover, unless, someone... at least, ties her up and throw her into hell's pit where she belongs, or so she presumes she belongs.

"Philia? Philia? Philia."

Snapping onto reality, She saw a plate of food placed onto her front, her hands already occupied with a silver spoon and fork. The food left untouched as her eyes wander around to see the other plates half finished...

"Are you okay, dear? You seem pale?"

Martial noticed, sittng beside the female whilst sitting at the head of the table...

"Ah, yes. Just remembered something unpleasant..."

Philia's eyes wander to Philip, who was just on the other side of where she sat, The feeling of betrayal and sadness came to wash over her yet she managed to supress it with years of supressing everything inside of her.

"Well, Don't let it bother you too much."

"Yes, Brother."

"Was it so unpleasant that you forgot to take your food?"

Philip fired, A smug look reflecting in his eyes as he stare at his sister across him.

"Philip."

"Why yes, do I have to explain to you the gruesome memories displayed onto me earlier."

"Philia."

"I don't see why not?"

"Enough! You two! Don't you see we're infront of the children?"

Martial shouted, angered by the dispute between the two siblings.

"What is it with you? Don't you see I am trying to prove something here?"

"Pray tell. There isn't much to prove."

Both were so full of pride that Martial had already resorted to slamming the table right then and there. Del Pilar sat, staring only to the three of them, worrying that the children across his seat were frightened one bit, yet, they were unfazed...

"Silence! Just for a single night, please! I'll allow you both to argue but not in this table nor near the children!"

At that moment, Martial felt a sharp sting of headache, going through his mind like wild fire. He held his head, yet, still

continued to lecture his two siblings.

"If I ever hear a single word of argue infront of the twins, I will personally send you both apart from each other!"

As they may say, This might be excessive but, It was quite a normal occurence when it comes to these types of households. Martial was already disappointed upon learning that the relationship between siblings was already in pieces, yet he ignored it because there were still hope of fixing such things...

But arguing infront of the food, in addition, children. What has their parents' teachings gone? Out the window for sure. It was too much really, The eldest has just ascended to being country representative and seeing that his younger siblings had grown apart, was just too... overwhelming and disappointing as the first born, the one that was entrusted with the reponsibility of becoming their second parent, forcibly.

Martial stood up and walked towards the door in anger, but halfway he felt dizzy and the next thing he knew was darkness;

[To Be Continued...]

9. Taken for Granted.

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"Padre, Please... I can't-"

"Are you wavering, boy?! Do as I say this instant!"

Trembling hands stricken by the thin rod of punishment from his adoptive father's hands. His hot tears going down on his face as he hears the racing beat of his heart.

"Take all your country spirit! We must control those blasted provinces from rebelling against my empire!"

It was neither his decision nor will, that his knees would be scrapped with the roughness of the floor, kneeling down as he couldnt handle the pain souring through his body as his country spirit forcely taken out after his father declared; Martial Law.

"Brother! Padre, Por favor!"

His sister pleaded, Her eyes taken the image of this insightly manner of his. Her fragile body being forced out the door as the soldiers pushed her back from entering.

"Take her away! Lock her up if you have to!"

"Philia!"

"Brother!"

He tried reaching out but failed. His own will taken away from him as the grip of the higher ups tighten and hurt him. The sight of his sister being taken away had reminded him of which he lost during the first time he was unable to do anything; Everything.

"Martial law! You are to stay here until we control those barking children!"

"Padre... I-"

In just a moment's time, A sharp sting landed on his face as he had face sidewards. His hearing already degraded to ringing as his vision became blurry...

"You're giving up now? With those potential in your golden eyes?"

"Padre..."

"Come now Martial. Help your dear Father for a while..."

Spanish Empire cold hands brushed through his face, their eyes locking into each other. One frightened and one menacing.

"Father..."

"Come Martial."

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"It is quite difficult to assess his excellency especially when he's in this state."

"Alright, Thank You."

As the Presidential doctor headed out, Philip-who sat by the nearest sofa by the bed, expressed his concern. Just few weeks in and the country representative was nowhere near giving signs of waking up.

"He is as incompetent as he left. He should've stayed quiet and remained in whatever hole he dug from."

"Philip! Enough of your complains! This is Kuya we are talking about and you're sitting there like its his fault for being alive!'"

"What if I am?"

"Enough! The both of you!"

A loud voice entered the conversation as a thud came with it. Turning to the doorway, The three siblings' eyes dropped to the floor as their grandfather, Luzon, made his way to their eldest brother. His splendidly decorated cane going from thud per thud as he walked.

"What did the doctor say?"

"Kuya's condition is complicated as of the moment."

Luzon merely hummed and sat down near the unconscious body of Martial. His hand by his body as he breathe slowly.

"Just a few weeks in after being chosen, Now he's collapsed and none of you children bother to tell me?"

His voice echoed through the halls, startling many. It was prominent that he was angry not just to his grandchildren but also to himself... As he spent his life away from politics and into a quite lavish one, He also spent it away from the family he had left, other than his two other siblings.

"We're sorry, Grandfather."

"We were meant to tell you later."

"Later is worse than never."

"Ate Philia..."

Peeking from the door, A young boy that they all recognize within one glance peeked his head through the opening. His eyes swollen

and red from crying, missing from his side was his twin sister that was unusual as the two were inseparatable.

"Bill... What are you doing here?"

Philia walked towards the boy, covering his sight of his unconscious father.

"I just came to check on Papa, since Terrie fell asleep... Is he awake now?"

The latter felt the silence ring as the young innocent child asked. They didn't knew how to respond nor how to react for Bill to understand that their father was showing no signs of waking up any time soon and been unable to be diagnosed by the Palace' doctor.

"He isn't awake? Is he?"

The silence only confirms the boy's thoughts.

"Come now, Bill. We can't let your sister be alone in long hours."

"No. I'll stay here with Papa."

Bill ran inside, His hand occupied with a book that seemed so old and ancient based on its cover. He sat beside his father on the bed, though, he knows he won't wake up even if he tried to wake him up...

"Bill..."

"Papa isn't incompetent. He isn't incompetent as you said earlier."

"You were listening?"

Luzon raised his brow, seeing that this boy refused to make eye contact and only stared at Martial's face whilst holding the book on his hand tightly.

"He didn't want to come back, but he made a deal, a vow, with the current President. Papa already is hurting, yet, he doesn't want to tell anyone because he's scared..."

"Scared? Him?"

"Papa only told us that he... No, He didn't tell us, I heard him. Papa wanted to die."

Bill took one of Martial's fingers and gripped it tightly, as his expression darkened remembering the day his father wanted to commit suicide by overdose of sleeping pills but failed to do so... They were all left speechless as the silence screamed more into them.

"Repeat that again..."

"Suicide... Why?"

Del could feel his heart beat soaring through his chest as if it wanted to get out as his breathing hastened. It felt like he was being suffocated, when he too knows the feeling of wanting to commit such an act...

"Nevertheless, Papa wants but can't do what he wants. Its a countryhuman's duty to serve and protect... The very same motto that made my father this way."

Bill slowly turned his gaze towards his very own adoptive relatives, A glare that doesn't seem to belong to a young person seen inside this boy's eyes, The hatred and sadness combining inside his deep red eyes that seemed to shine like gold for a second.

"Bill is your name, Correct?"

Luzon spoke up, bending his knees to the child despite the pain occuring in it as he held on to his cane for support.

"Yes..."

"You seem very close to your dear Papa."

"Papa took care of us, He took us in when we were abandoned in an alleyway."

"Hmm... Did he tell you anything if he was feeling something, or

anything at all?"

Bill suddenly went silent, knowing what Luzon was doing... He was digging for information through him. But it was needed, He needed to help his father, otherwise... Martial would never wake up...

"No... Nothing at all."

Bill once again gripped Martial's finger, a flow of countryspirit seemed to seep out of the boy's hand and enter Martial's body.

"Hmm."

At that very second, Martial coughed. Surprising them all. His breathing fastened as if he was jump awake by a dream he had, Martial's eyes then fixtated on his son, Bill, as a smile slowly went upon his lips.

Exhausted and weak as he was, Martial went and gently pressed his hand on the boy's head.

"Good Job. You did what I told you."

"I only did what you left in this book you told me to read..."

Chuckling, Martial didn't notice the eyes that were bewildered upon what happened to him. Bill sadly smiled at his father, who seemed to have regained his composure after being unconscious for a time...

"Kuya..."

"Ah, Philia... And Lolo. I didn't know you were here?"

Luzon swollowed his saliva, composing himself first before he could speak up.

"How are you, Hijo?"

"Fine-!"

At once, Martial coughed again. As he cover his mouth while attempting to sit up, liquid of the colour red came out to his palm,

alerting the latter of this...

"Kuya!"

Philia jumped, frightened of what may happen to her brother. Philip and Del stared in shock as they see their sister and grandfather panic, whilst staring at their elder brother's so called youngest child remain calm.

"I'm fine. Don't worry, This is nothing."

Wiping the blood from his mouth, A smile formed onto his lips once again as he sat up straight. Though despite having a calm demeanor and present aura, Martial was having pains everywhere inside of his body, from head to toe, Yet he acted as if nothing was happening.

"Are you sure?"

"You look more pale, Hijo. Go back to lying down."

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"Bill...?"

Awakening from her nap, Terrie found herself alone in the shared bedroom of her's and her twin brother. Looking all around, The silence rang as she hug her plushie close to her chest.

The thunders rumbled and growled with each lightning they strike on the Earth. The dark hall seemingly lurking with creepiness as the rain punded on their roof roughly, creating noises for a child's darkest imagination.

"Bill?"

She called out, Her bare feet kissing the cold floorboards as she made her way to the staircase, leading to the first floor. Her trembling hands guided her by touching the familiar walls of the hall...

"Terrie? What are doing up so late?"

Looking behind her, slowly, Her eyes caught an unfamiliar silhouette. Shaken with fear, her voice didn't allow itself to be known and retracted inside her mouth.

"Ah... I..."

Her shaky voice revealed to it otherwise...

"Oh, Relax, Child. Its only me."

"Kuya PKP!"

PKP-1930 stood anxious as he watched the little girl hover down to his legs, frightened of the storm raging in.

"Oh dear. Are you looking for your twin?"

Nodding, He was just given an answer by the child, carrying her into his arms as he hushed the child's silent cries...

"Your twin is with your other siblings in your older brother's room."

Letting the littel girl down, he gave his phone to her, the flashlight turned on and pointed to the direction to which she needed to go. Terrie gave a little nod to her father's close friend and set off to her siblings' room.

Sighing, PKP touched the hand rails of the stairs and went down quietly. The thunders screamed in agony as the flickering lights of the sky go on about. As far as he's concerned, no one knew the fact that the owner of the house was not currently present.

"Its been two hours, Mar. Where the h*ll are you?"

Suddenly, the glass garden door slammed open. The winds violently coming in with the leaves spinning in the air, the pouring rain coming willingly as they dirtied the white floors.

Martial stood there, panting and soaked. His clothes barely can be called clothes as blood marks from wounds, scratched and unrepairable could be see written all over it. His crimson hair damped as water trinkled on his shoes, covering his face of his

expression.

"Where the h*ll have you been, Man?!"

Coming closer, PKP was clearly scared and worried for his friend yet he froze midway.

"Martial... What is that you're holding?"

Clutching on his chest, Martial held a glowing piece in his hand. Glowing from dark to gold as it went...

"A fragment..."

"Martial, This is dangerous! Put it back where you got it from!"

"...Of me."

"What?"

Looking up, PKP's eyes widened as horror filled his face...

Sitting in a room, being interviewed by the relatives of his beloved friend, PKP couldn;t help but think down to memory lane after hearing what happened to Martial lately after returning to life and becoming coutry representative again.

"Have you no idea if Martial carried an illness or some sort?"

"If I did, i would've told you sooner, Aye?"

"How much?"

"Money won't let my mouth start, Dear Philippines. I have no use of it, and whatsover won't use it to drag a friend along the mud."

Philip clicked his tongue in a tantrum, sitting back to his chair as Del Pilar took over.

"We don't want to use force but if we have to..."

"Incredible, Truly Remarkable! This is the true faces of the government for over 3 decades? No wonder many are still on

Martial's side."

PKP laughed, his hands clapping out of disgust that their true faces are right infront of him. Disgusting, utterly disgusting.

"You know, You were the one who wrote the first constitution of Asia. Why don't you read what rights we all have before you go and bribe us with that dirty money of yours?"

"PKP-"

"Now, Now, I wasn't finished! I may not know what you horrendous beings may do to me, but if you touch Martial. I doubt history would brand martial law as a grace period for this country's near downfall."

The two siblings stayed quiet, PKP had a point in his statement despite being a rebel for decades against the government.

"Humor me you two. Martial may look incompetent and weak compared to what you have witnessed last time. But, he is going through several things, no country should ever have. Not even you Philip, remember that."

Barging out of the room, PKP found himself pacing faster to get out of the suffocating air of the Presidential Palace. He didn't really liked being here, as he was also a victim living inside these very walls when they were forced to scatter and hide beneath the darkest of nights.

' Disgusting. Utterly Horrendeous. ', He thought as he scratched his left arm, as if he tried to remove somthing from it even if there was nothing on it... It was a trauma response.

Why was it? Why was it that out of everyone who could've rose up and defended themselves against that darkness, It had to be his dear Friend? It had to be Martial? He was ready, ready for criticism, hate, solitude and most probably death, if a god out there allowed him, but why Martial Law?

Why was the one person, who did everything they could to let this country live, die everyday just because they were accounted for

Millions of millions of death? That was no excuse, everyones knew that. But was it really an excuse when it was needed? when it wasn't really in their hands in the first place?

' My friends... Martial, My brother. '

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"Martial! We have to get out now!"

PKP shouted, His voice barely heardable with all the commotion outside, The gates of Malacanang can barely contain such a number of people, their torches lighting up the dark palace' night as they protest and rally.

"Make a run for it, Comrade."

"What are you on about? Hindi kita iiwanan sa impyernong ito! Martial, Lalamunin ka ng partido ni Philip at ang kanyang napili, Sumama ka na sakin, may alam akong lugar kung saan ka magiging ligtas!"

[I won't leave you in this hell! Martial, Philip's and his representative would devour you whole if you stay here, come with me, I know a place where you can be safe!]

"No. As long as the first family is here, I am to stay and protect them."

"Martial!"

He stayed stubborn till the end. Martial did.

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"His excellency's condition is as stable as it should be. A miracle to say the least."

"Yes, Thank You doctor."

"Please excuse me."

"How are you feeling brother?"

Philia went to her older brother, worried on behalf of him as the doctor made his way out of the room. Martial merely smiled and

reassured the female that it was merely fatigue that left him to collapse.

"Are you quite sure?"

"I am quite tired these past few days. It was just stress piling up, Don't worry."

Philia's expression showed no signs of being reassured as her brows curled themselves to the middle of her forehead, worry going over her mind as she sat on a chair near her brother.

"You should at least take a day off-"

"No, Philia. I can't take a day off even if its just one day."

"Brother you're sick!"

"I know..."

Sighing, Martial let out a quiet whisper;

"That's just how it is... Sick or not, I am the country's representative."

Unbeknowst to any, A cut made its way to Martial's back, cutting what seemed to be a part of his body....

[To Be Continued...]

10. Rising Struggles

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Staring at the raging waves of the sea, terrifying and tall. I could hear muffled voices screaming and shouting around me yet, I couldn't take off my eyes from the waters.

"*Phi*-Philip!"

I felt Del's grip upon my arm as he pulled me to stand. My legs won't listen to anything as my eyes couldn't turn away from anything else other than the raging sea. It was mesmerizing yet so far to reach and achieve.

"Philip, We have to go!"

Like the world had come to me all at once, All of my senses started coming back to my control as Del started dragging me away from the ship we were boarded upon, to the port's safest building. My heart pounded as loudly that it was whispering in my ears every second. The fear, anxiety and experience was something else... something familiar.

"Are you okay? Do you have injuries?"

"No... I'm Okay."

"That's good."

Del hugged me out of worry. His warmth covered me despite me being slightly taller than him and much younger, he didn't seem to mind, he was still my older brother.

"Philip! Del! Are you both alright?"

"Philia...? What are you-"

With no time to expense, She just squished her hands on my face and started looking for any abnormalities on me, up and down her eyes go. Then, turning to Del just to do the same thing, sighing afterwards. Taking out her fan and doing her habit of covering half her face with it and speak in an authoritative manner...

The question is... *Why is she here?*

"Good to know you're both fine."

"What are you even doing here and not assisting your precious representative?"

Del somehow got spite on his tone as his tongue clicked after. He was practically glaring at Philia, I couldn't say I wasn't doing the same...

"... He's the reason why I'm here."

She whispered, I couldn't hear her properly yet I knew that she driven here somehow because of him. This woman wouldn't just step out of the Palace for trivial reasons.

"Ma'am..."

A soldier came up to her behind, whispering something in her ear that sounded serious as he eyes widened in fear or even schock that she quickly rushed out the room. I could hear her muffled voice turn up blurry words as she point towards the sea... *Why?*

"Sir Del and *Kamahalan*."

"Ah, Captain. What is going on outside? Why is the first lady out there shouting franatically like a mad woman?"

The captain seemed to hesitate as there was some sort of come back as he spell out his words;

"You see, *Kamahalan*... Before you had washed up to shore, An object had entered the water to where you had fallen earlier and a few minutes later, you had managed to be rescued despite the strong currents and large waves turning.

"What?"

"That doesn't answer his question, Captain."

"Apologies. The madam is stating that..."

The captain hesitates again;

"... His excellency was the one that entered the water earlier."

"What?!"

Such words. I felt somethig inside me beat. Pain? Fright? Something consumed me as I hear a single word; *Live...* From there, A sudden string of pain my head flew by and made my vision black in a socond as I last heard Del scream my name.

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Floating endlessly in the dark, cold and wide space of the sea. I felt too weak to even fight against my failing consciousness...

The currents of the water brush over my skin as they take me in and drag me to its depths. I knew I should've used my country spirit so recklessly, yet, I couldn't leave my brother to drown and die alone in this sea.

May the ocean be more gentle to this disgraced being...

It had been a few hours prior before I heard the report from Quezon.

"Kuya, If we don't make a move against-"

"Philia, I am not hearing this. I've ceased using such methods long ago."

"You don't seem to grasp the situation here, Martial! I am trying to protect your status by reinstating and forging it anew foundation!"

Sighing, This was the Philia I knew years ago. I thought people could change, I guess some people don't.

"Even so. Drawing Philip's party to its edge is already such an old move. I won't do it. Regradless of what you say."

Placing my glasses down, I arranged the senate bills that had been passed to me by Quezon earlier. I could see Philia's eyes fixated on the papers as they fall into a perfect order.

"Do you have anything more to say?"

None, That's what I presumed. She crossed her arms as she flopped onto the nearby couch. Her irritated expression says otherwise. We may have had a series of years that we hadn't met, changes have some and go, but we were still of the same blood and that wasn't going to change anything that we are still the same.

"Hmm."

Soon, A knock came upon the doors. I silently stated for the latter to come inside, giving my permission. And there entered Quezon, my substitute secretary and aide after Manila left for a leave.

"Sir, Sir Philip along with Sir Del has Left for the inspection of Manila Bay."

"What? Who gave the permission?!"

Philia jumped; I raised my hand to stop her reckless behavior, looking forward to Quezon for any information he hasn't spilt yet...

"How long have they been gone?"

"About an hour or so, Sir..."

"An inspection isn't harmful, Philia. As long as they left with some of the Palace's Security group, Right?"

Quezon didn't speak; A heavy feeling came over me as the silence screamed...

"Right?"

The heavy feeling in my chest worsened as the wind suddenly jolted

the glass doors to the balcony behind me, opening with aggressiveness as dark clouds scatter around the city in a fast rate.

The paper on the desk flew away as I stood up from my chair to face the vast view of the city. Dark, stormy clouds filling up every inch of the skyline as it came from the oceans and sea surrounding our country.

"Where is Philip and Del now, Quezon?"

"I believe that they had just boarded the new ship, Sir."

At that moment, The winds started to go more violent that the previous. There had not been any forecasting of storm beforehand, so why now?

Abruptly, Quezon's phone started to ring; as he answered immediately, his eyes widened and he was becoming restless with every second. His hand trembled, so did his lips. He looked at me with desperation and grief.

"S-sir Philip..."

Upon hearing my brother's name, I felt like vomitting; the heavy feeling inside my chest, scattered to my lungs and stomach that it barely giving me enough air to breath in.

"What? What happened to Philip!?"

"Sir Philip was blown overboard by the strong winds and waves."

I could merely hear their voices inside my ear as a long ringing sound took over as well as my own heartbeat. My whole body was trembling in fright, knowing what dangers could be surrounding my siblings right now...

The next thing I knew was that, I jumped out from the balcony of the Palace.

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Burning toarches, Dark skies, The rage of the people rampaging in

both vocal and mental. The Malacanang Palace rose up in flames in the rebellion of the people... Yellow scattered everywhere as they oppress and chase away the red they loathe.

"Down with the tyrant!"

Their voices echo with each passing second, with each passing breath they breathe in the very same moment. Eyes blinded with the anger they held inside for years and my eldest brother was to blame...

Looking over the window from the outside of the palace, I hear the footsteps of the family that had caused this rebellion to start, escaping in a hurried manner, yet, none of them was familiar to my ears. The only thing was the figure looking out of the said window;

"Martial..."

Whispering under my breath, I went inside. A gun to my side, my chest lit up with resentment as the pace of my footsteps hastened, taking me even further to where my so called elder brother was.

"*—ni Philip at ang kanyang napili, Sumama ka na sakin, may alam akong lugar kung saan ka magiging ligtas!"*

[—Philip and his party, Come with me, I know a place where you can be safe!]

Two different voices fought over the room ahead. No lights were on, just the light from the fires outside the windows of the palace.

"No. As long as the first family is here, I am to stay and protect them."

"Martial!"

The voice seemed desperate, yet I heard no reply but a slight rustle and footsteps by the door as they got out of the room to the hallway, escaping.

"In the end, you were going to leave me to run..."

I hesitated from grabbing the doorknob. Martial's voice was

monotone and unchanging as the rustle of the curtains once again whispered...

The silence prevailed as no words were uttered next from the room. The rage of the outside seemed to get louder as the stairs trembled with the stomps coming up each and every milisecond.

Without a second doubt, I rushed in, pulling the door aside as my gun went ahead to shoot. Yet, what my eyes caught had been... *Nothing.*

Scattered documents, letters, agreements, rejected and and passed proposals, everything was on the floor, lying. Yet, not a body on sight. A picture frame or two, present on the desk, yet no one was there, not as single soul was in the room, but an opened balcony door

As the sun began to rise, the little light of the outside shone upon a paper, trying to be flown away but was stopped by a pen. Choosing to come up and see, a familiar set of handwritting was there;

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*Swiss Accounts Pass : ****0612*

*Transferred **M to World Bank. Ownership Transfer to UN from The Philippine Republic in the second cabinet, Seal of approval; ✓*

January 1st, Officially step down...

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"Do you think this is a joke? I sign that paper and one of us—No, Every single one of us will die!"

"You don't know that! Right, The 1987 Consti—"

"The reason why no one was affected during EDSA was because the

1973 constitution was overlapping with the 1987 one! Philip immediately replaced Martial and therefore, there was a representative even before a power struggle was made!"

Hearing two different voices, The black void seemed to fade away as he started opening his eyes. The blurred image of Philia and Del started to become more clear.

"Augh..."

Groaning in pain, Philip started to sit up, his hand on his head as a headache came in. Noticing their brother's groan, the two started to head towards the younger as their worried faces came on, checking on the younger;

"Philip! Thank Goodness you're awake!"

"Are you okay? Does anything hurt? Do you need anything?"

'Weird... These two doesn't agree on the same thing, not even once...', Trying to sit up from his previous position, He was held back by his two worried siblings.

"Del, Get the doctor or even a nurse?"

"Ha?"

"Go."

Philip said nothing and merely watched as Del walked out the door, scratching in nape in frustration as Philia watched as well with an attentive yet unwavering stare to the other, before her eyes went back to him.

"Why are you here?"

Philip's head turned and looked at the outside, Avoiding eye contact with his own sister as she fixed his blanket; They weren't in the best relationship despite being brother-sister, they have been distant since the 19's, making them more of strangers than family.

"You never bat an eyelid for a century about my affairs—"

"Don't talk anymore, or I'll really leave. I haven't been home since you collapsed."

This raised a question to Philip. Home? What did she meant by not been home since his episode?

"You've been asleep for a total of three days now. You were moved to the hospital since day 1 to monitor your condition."

Soon, Doctors and nurses came flooding in with Del infront pulling the female, who held no restraint from the other as the proffesionals came to examine their country representative. Philip looked at his two siblings, confused on what Philia said, yet he had to focus on what the doctors came to ask him...

After a few hours of examination, Philip had been deemed healthy yet just be sure he was kept in the hospital for a while to recover from the shock of three days ago.

"What really happened?"

Philip clenched his sheets, looking at Del beside him intently. The Older couldn't speak with a clear answer, as he also didn't know how to process nor decribe what happened to his younger brother.

"After... Philia talked about Martial was the one who went into the water to pull you out. You suddenly collapsed..."

Del seemed to hestitate as he fiddled his fingers against each other;

"And?"

"And for a moment, Your heart seemed to stop. We rushed you to the hospital but even the doctors were helpless on reviving you..."

Philip couldn't speak; Him, Dead? Then, How was he breathing in that moment?

"It caused mainstream panic within the Palace. With Martial gone, you were to be his replacement due to the fact that you are the main and previous representative... But with also you bedridden, No one knew what to do."

"How about you taking over?"

"I did try. But without the seal of oath of the country representative, The seat will remain empty. We haven't informed the public of this incident, but their bound to find out sooner or later..."

The older looked down, ashamed of what he couldn't control. Philip also couldn't comfort his brother, as he also didn't know what to think nor what to say. It was also his first time hearing of a power struggle ever since the 1st constitution.

"Del. Philip. I'll be in the palace, if you need anything, you know what to do."

Philia peeked from the door, her coat around her shoulders as she was ready to leave. Her expression never said anything meaningful as they remain empty and deserted of any emotion.

"What are you gonna do in the palace?"

"What else? You're incapacitated, and Del's not a quality representative. Therefore, I am the only designated survivor in this case."

They wanted to deny, but no one could; It had only been months since the last inaguaration and it was already chaotic as it seemed. Even if it was planned from the start, nothing was going together...

"Del, Leave us."

"What?"

By Philip's sudden command, the two was left outstanded by his seriousness of the moment. The younger's stare slightly became angrier as the two didn't move a muscle.

"Out. Philia, come here."

Del glared at Philia at the last moment, before closing the door behind the female.

"What do you want? Cut to the chase."

Flopping to a chair near the end of the bed Philip was lying from. Philia slouched, crossed her legs, revealing a apart of her legs to the male, despite her wearing a long skirt. If this was back in the day, she would have been considered disrespectful, a witch perhaps.

"February 26, 1986? Do you remember?"

"What are you up to, hmm?"

Philia was slightly shook upon hearing the specific date Philip whispered;

"I was there..."

"What?"

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"Sir Del."

Looking over to his side, Del saw Manila standing a little afar from where he was, holding a bouquet on his hands as a gesture.

"I've heard. His *Kamahalan* is awake..."

"Yes..."

The older sighed, his pent up emtions coming out with that breather. Manila didn't speak, knowing how tired the other must have been...

"How are you, Sir Del?"

The city tried to start a conversation, Meaning nothing but a sign of sympathy with teh current events that were going around in his absence.

"I can't say for sure if I'm alright or not."

"Why is that?"

"Ever since Martial came back, I've been hearing these voices I don't even understand."

Taking another sigh, *It must've been hard,* Manila thought. Del couldn't comprehend nor say it to any one of his siblings what he was hearing, because even he too, couldn't grasp the knowledge or information coming to him like a flood...

"Where's her excellency?"

"Philia? She's inside, Philip wanted to talk."

"That's a first."

"What?"

Manila suddenly wanted to take back is words, but seeing Del's expression, he knew couldn't hide it for as long as he just did.

"I mean, Philia would likely avoid coversing with Sir Philip and vice versa, considering the past of you siblings altogether. But for Sir Philip to initiate the coversation first..."

"I know. And I'm already worried what they are talking about. Philip seemed serious earlier as he wanted me to get out of the room quickly."

"I'm sure Philip has a reason why."

Manila smiled at the older, reassuring him that whatever may be, there is a reason behind everything, Big or small, There must be one behind it.

Suddenly, Both of their phones rang a notification, not long after the whole hospital's staff, visitor, patient, security's phone all started to ring a notification. As Del went to check, The door to Philip's room burst open, with Philia panting in anger appeared.

"Get in here quick!"

They didn't know the reason, but the two hurriedly went inside without any hesitation as the female slammed the door shut, locked and covered the any windows in the room with the blinds.

"Sh*t. Why was this posted before us knowing?"

Philia bit her nail, anxious was writted all over her face as she paced back and forth.

"What—What Happened?"

Philip and Del were confused as neither of them had checked their phones at the moment, That was, until Manila had checked his that he expressed a moment of shock and fear.

"What? What happened Manila?!"

"Sir Martial..."

"What? Spill it out already!"

Del angrily spoke, his fist clenched into a ball as he was also desparate to know what was causing this fear to envelope in all of them.

"He—He"

"Martial's body was found."

Philia slipped in, combing her hair back with her hand, distress and anxiety, as she sighed every second, thinking of what could have possibly, or even who, in their right mind would post an article like this?

"Then? Where is he?"

"His body was found. Not by our Navy nor Marine corps."

"Then who found him? If not us?"

"The Chinese."

Manila stated, his schock finally sinking in, as he coughed up the words to say so.

"The Chinese took his body."

The two men finally understood the situation. If another country took Martial's body, dead or alive, they could use it as a hostage as

the seal of representative is still on Martial and therefore he controls the country in his hands...

"Sh*t. We can't delete this now, can we? Its on a public platform, Views are already pouring in every second."

"I'll try to contact China, if he was the one behind this, I'll make sure he gets what he deserves."

"Ma'am, I think... You can't do that now."

Manila hesitated; The three were on the capital now, as he read the whole article to them;

"*By this day, The Chinese government has turned the body to the North Korean government for classified reasons.*"

Damn it all, Philip thought, not only was the chinese involved also the north koreans. They had no power against them, If they were to ask for another country's help, they would be looked down upon again, as a weak, helpess country... But what should they do?

"Are you sure about this North?"

"No doubt. I have something for this representative in my country."

"Well, It's up to you. Remember, Don't kill him."

"I won't"

As the train sped through its rails, The two countries guarded the unconscious body beside them. One held a news paper close and the other smoked his way into the corner...

I'll repay what is due, Martial...

[To Be Continued...]

11. See Right Through Me.

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With the Palace on the verge of crumbling; Reporters swarmed here and there from the gates, The employees hurriedly tried to calm the crowd forming outside yet they rivaled those who wanted good will for their own gain.

Amidst of all the chaos, Philia called a meeting within the house of representatives, as a emergency was at stake for their nation;

"Thank you all for coming at such short notice. I know all of you must've heard by now about our country representative."

All represenatives, human, city and province alike had all their ears and eyes on the family upon the high balcony.

"Now, If anyone has a concern in hand, do so now."

Philia's brows curled as she saw the few raised hands come up to the whole theater. Biting her lip, She clenched her fist in order to supress her anger and other emotions to keep herself at bay.

"Please. Walk up to the center and state your concern."

One by one, All concerns lead up to electing a country representative just incase of the hostage situation with Martial.

"Its what the majority wants."

"Electing a representative now would likely hurt the party that would replace Martial."

Having taken an hour break, The three siblings discussed things between themselves beyond the high balcony of the house; Philia

kept biting her nail as she couldn't concentrate...

"Still, We have no choice but to."

Philip had to be discharged from the hospital early against the wishes of his doctors and was to reside in the palace to recover yet crisis is crisis.

"How about the seal of representatives? Once a global meeting is held, the replacement would need approval to enter and represent our country."

Clicking their tongue, their at a verge of not accomplishing anything due to a damned seal that recognizes them as the leader of their country. Without it, their just mere replacements, nothing more...

"So, what do we do? Sit around here like fools?"

The two males looked at yhe only female in the room, her hair cokbed back as her white strands scatter snd reveal itself to them. Philia tried to keep her composure yet she didn't know what to do, or even how to explain to their representatives outside wjat os really going on.

"We don't know what to do. Why don't you suggest something, huh?

"Me, I have been taking care of this country since my final reign and you suggest I don't know how much of a problem this is?"

"Then? What's your solution then? Miss Commonwealth?"

Del glarer at the female, prickling nerve from her. Turning around, Philia grabbed the older by his collar and dragged him to the wall, her face lit up with anger.

"Don't you dare call me by that name, understand!"

"Heh. Seems to me your being irrational."

"Enough! Philia, Let go of Del."

Philip tried to stop the two from throwing hands at each other, as their country spirit clashed with each other. The two stared at each other's eyes with rage.

"Fine. But the next time he spits at my face, I will be the one who decides his fate."

"Philia!"

Philia slammed the door behind her as she rushed outside; Philip sighed in disappointment knowing they'll really never get done with anything considering their position at the moment. Separate feelings with work, they said... Lies.

"Why do you have to provoke her like that? Now no decision will be made!"

"Then, you make a decision?"

"It's not that easy, Del. There's alot of process and going through Philia is just a start, but now its blurry that my decision would even get through."

Sighing again, Philip massaged his temples, a headache going back and forth inside his head;

"What are we going to tell the others?"

"I don't know. Its a first for me."

Sighing again, they really didn't know what to do nor what to say... Time was ticking.

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Tch, What did I even expect of them?, Philia deeply thought, her hand combing her back hair. Irritation filled her expression as her forehead was layered with wrinkle, with her brows curled upon the center.

Pacing back and forth, she was making decisions alone... Again, as she always did ever since Martial disappeared years ago up until his

reappearance. Iy had always been like that, she, the one who decides the internal, and the external to her brothers. That's why corruption slipped under her fingers... She became restless.

With problems one after another, everyone couldn't catch a break. The West Philippine Sea, A warning of a new illness from the WHO, The terrorism in Mindanao, The rising unemployment, poverty and death rates from a vaccination mistake and so on and so forth... It was almost like hell for someone in charge.

"My lady."

Looking over to her side, Ceasing to bite her fingernail, Philia saw a Palace security coming directly to her with a firm expression yet a hesitant aura.

"What is it? Why have you come here rather than send me a message?"

"My lady, I was sent directly here by His grace, Sir Luzon."

Upon hearing her grandfather's name, her eyes shot up as getting sent to deliver a message directly from the Island state was uncommon as it was rare, that it was merely been done when the Japanese were forced out of the country and another had to be seated as country representative.

In other terms, Emergencies.

"What did *He* say?"

"He had said nothing but to come get you, Miss."

What?, Luzon wasn't a man to send someone over just to tell them to get his granddaughter, rather, he was one to use other ways that this... So why?

"Did something happen? For Lolo to do this..."

"I'm afraid...."

Upon hearing this, Philia wasted no time and came with the

messenger in no time. Philip and Del were alerted minutes later by staff members of the house, as they were to go back on stage in a few...

"Lolo!"

Philia panted, catching her breath as she leaned on the door for support. Her Grandfather, Luzon stood at the end of the room, Infront of the representative's desk, his cane going down to his well shined shoes, as his suit fitted the early 19s.

"You're here."

"What's the matter? Did something happen while we were gone?"

"Yes, Unfortunately so."

Luzon forcibly moved his cane informt of him, making a loud click sound as the female flinched in fear. The older looked serious and angry, that she dared not to speak.

"Martial... Is in North Korea?"

Philia couldn't speak as she trembled in fear. The last time she was this scared was when The Japanese Empire was going to go violent on her for a mistake she had done against him.

"Why hasn't any single one of you told me? Why haven't I been informed!"

His voice echoed in the halls, gripping the handle of his cane, He gritted his teeth in anger, going back om the desk and angrily picking up a bunch of pictures and threw them in the air.

"Tell me what this is? Tell me!"

Looking at the ground to which the pictures landed, Philia's eyes widened as she saw what she had saw a few days prior before this whole ordeal happened.

Large black wings like a raven's, Eyes of Gold and Black combined as they danced in a sea of cracks... Martial in the center of it all...

As the vessel.

"I... I don't—"

"Eyes of gold and black, wings of a raven, cracks of darkness on skin. Philia, You really didn't know about this?"

Philia could merely shake her head. Afraid that whatever she may say might anger the older even more...

"*Sigh*... Tch, I don't know how he did, but Your brother, Martial... Is toppling country spirits of the dead."

Raising her head, It was unheard of. Her brother? to mess with forbidden power? especially when he was a country representative already? *Why?*

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"I really can't figure you out."

"Hmm?"

North Korea stared at Martial at the end of the table, opposite to his seat. His expression crooked up to confusion, As the Filipino ate his fill quietly, also responding to the korean's confusion the same.

"Explain?"

Martial put down his silverware as he chewed on what he had ate earlier before the quietness of the room was disrupted;

"First thing you did when you woke up from your coma was stare at a wall for 30 minutes or so, then, after that, I randomly get a report that someone was wrecking my garden, to find you somehow creating a small farm. No wonder you survived seclusion all alone."

The Filipino couldn't help but choke on his food, resulting to him desparately grabbing the glass of water and chugging it down. Feeling embarassed for his actions, Martial stayed quiet on his seat.

"Now, I wonder?"

"About?"

Martial finally spoke, his brows as high as it could go.

"Was all your 90's like gentlemen attitude, a facade all this time?"

He was stunned. Though he refused to admit it, It was a facade me put up with, normalizing his own pain in a way that his own personality took a toll and shifted.

"I see... I take your silence as a yes, then."

"Huh? Wait—"

"Don't. I know. No need to tell me anything. Finish your food and meet me in my office, ask any of the soldiers to point you out."

North Korea hurriedly went out, he knew the silence and awkwardness of the air would envelope and devour them both if he stayed anymore.

"Ah.. Thank you."

Not a second moment, Martial was left alone to finish his plate, that only took a mere few minutes.

He took his plate and started to head for the kitchen, attempting to wash his leftovers on his own on the sink, but he was immediately stopped by one of the panicked servants of the house.

"Oh, no, I can do it myself, Thank you."

He couldn't understand the human, sure they were speaking korean yet it had an accent or dialect that he not knew as he merely knew the dialects from the south and not the north.

The servant kept saying things and pointing at his plates and themself, panicked and stressed. Martial gave in a few seconds, As he saw the servant hurriedly take on the job as swiftly as possible.

"Thank you then..."

He went out of his way to not further disturb the worker in their place. He went out to the hallways, the heat barely giving way for the cold outside to sip inside.

"Ah, Excuse me! Dear soldiers."

Walking up to two rounding soldiers, Martial tried to speak to them;

"Do you know where North Korea's office is?"

The two looked at each othrr for a second and back to him, attempting to speak like he was;

"There. Right. Supreme Office's."

"Alright, Thank you."

Before he could go and set on his adventure, The two soldiers' looked at him again, up and down, before going on their day, saying things in their own language...

Martial knew it wasn't as good as he would hope. He knew what he was introduced to the people there, just to stay for his own recovery...

A *hostage.*

Being a hostage doesn't sound awful at all..., He thought deeply, but deep inside of him, he knew that it was going to trigger something as a scar to reopen.

"So Right here, I presume?"

Turning right, He saw a portrait, not the usual portrait of North Korea's human representative but rather a portrait of the north korean himself.

Firm, Serious, unbound and unwavering the north korean was. Martial remembered that back then, Portrait such as that was invested upon him, yet he didn't like it one bit.

It showed a side of him that he had to forcibly put on without a choice in hand.

Walking along, He saw different portraits of different sizes, and of different occasions, none of them showed the Korean dictator an affectionate nor warm expression.

One, in particular, caught his eye.

"This must me North when he was young, and... South Korea. And this must be their father?"

Three people stood within the portrait, one with a blurred face, South Korea's face smiled up, and North... had a smile, a normal and true gentle smile.

"Compared to others, this was the only time you smiled, huh?"

He remembered. Martial remembered that he was like this, smiling happily for a brother he looked up to and got together with;

"Ipagpatuloy mo, Martial."

[Continue It, Martial.]

Happiness never ended well for the both of them...

"Kahit ikaw. Kahit ikaw lang, Martial. Alam ko mabubuhay ka."

[If its you. Even if its you, Martial. I know you'll survive.]

Walking a bit more, He finally arrived at North Korea's office. The doors guarded by two more soldiers, as he heard voices inside...

"Should I come in another time?"

Suddenly, The doors burst open and a number of people walked out of the room, not a single glance was exchanged from them as they hurried out...

Martail saw North Korea from the distance, almost seemingly holding himself up from flipping the table and causing a mess from

hos angered expression.

"Tch! You don't even want to make this country work! You just F*cking want to destroy it at its core!"

The guards unfazed by their leader's actions remained steadfast and firm on their positions, barely changing of their emotion painted on their faces.

North panted, his anger wasn't hidden from his face and action of throwing whatever was in his desk as the papers of important documents flew in the air... Martial didn't say anything as he knew what the Korean was feeling and his actions were reasonable, at least to him.

"Martial..."

The Korean finally saw him;

"Am I coming in on a bad time?"

"Oh no, no! Come in!"

North Korea hurriedly collected what he could gather at the moment, as Martial excused himself to enter. The papers on the floor was swiftly collected by the two as they arrange it by the table.

"You had to see that mess. Sorry."

"No need to apologise. I understand."

"Still—"

Releasimg a chuckle, Martial smiled at the korean, seemingly getting a glimpse of his younger self, who he deemed as apologetic and naive at times.

"Seeing you apologise like that, is new and out of character of you."

"What do you mean?"

Another Chuckle.

"What?"

"Nothing. Its new to see that the *Great* North Korea is apologising so attentively and consistently, out of character to what you were described outside, hmm?"

North Korea laughed, thinking of it like a joke; Martial didn't mind it since it was what he sees, not like it was anyone else'...

*Cute... Sh*t*, Martial thought, He himself knew it was just day 1 of him waking up from a short coma, but is he getting sick? Claustrophobia maybe? Or perhaps... Stockholm? On the first day???

The hell's wrong with him?, North Korea thought, seeing the Filipino turn away with his ears slightly red and was somehow releasing some heat from his body, as his hand was on his mouth.

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Looking over the secenry of the outside, Luzon smiled as the cool breeze hit his face gently, the quietness and harmony that surrounded the village was too fragile to disrupt.

"Ama! Naparito po kayo?"

[Father! You came?]

Turning around, The older came to spot his lovely daughter-in-law holding one of his twin grandchildren in her arms, her bright and cheery smile welcomed him to their home.

"Aba! Hindi ko makakalimot ang binyag ng aking mga apo!"

[Why! I won't miss out on my grandchildren's christening!]

Luzon chuckled, seeing his little grandson waking up on his own mother's arms, spurting random sounds as to whisper and alarm the older people.

"Lolo!"

[Grandfather!]

Behind the lady, A young boy came running to Luzon's legs and immediately hugged the older one by one of his legs.

"Martial! Apo ko!"

[Martial! My boy!]

"Martial. Huwag mo masyadong abalahin ang Lolo mo!"

[Martial. Don't disturb your grandfather too much!]

"Sus! Si Katipunan naman. Apo ko'y nangangailangan nang atensyon mula sa kanyang lolo, kung kaya't huwag mo siyang abalahin."

[Sus! Katipunan. My grandkid is in need of attention from his grandfather, so let him be.]

The child giggled being carried into the elder's arms...

That was the last time that child was genuinely happy. Once his baptism dawned upon him, his fate was sealed with prophecies overwriting his own; Two suns existed in the sky, One sun shining like gold and splendidly brightened up the skies, the other covered in darkness, yet shone indeffinitely among the dimmed skyline. One must devour the other to suceed the sky.

Luzon kept thinking of these things as he stood by the doors of a room, to which once he enters, he would be faced by the children of the one he failed to protect.

"Sir..."

Quezon worriedly lingered beside him.

"No worries. I... Will deal with this myself."

Twisting the door knob, he expected himself to enter in just a second, yet he heard a voice inside talking to someone;

"Papa... isn't going to come back, is he? Bill?"

Bill? The boy Martial left here with his twin?, Luzon carefully listened from the door crack, The silence of the room thickened as no one answered back for a few seconds.

"No. Let him be for a while. He needs his distance and they need realization."

"Realization? At this era? It took Martial a decade to realise his mistaken position and now he suffers the consequence that he never wanted. What makes his family then?"

Martial? Why are these children saying their father's name so carelessly?

The older was now confused as to why their childlike voices wasn't the same but mature and strict manner of speaking was presented in the conversation.

"Now, Now, don't be mistaken. Rather, wouldn't you want to know why... Your Excellency and Grace, *Luzon*?"

At the command of their voices, Luzon felt a strong chill down his body as his heart started to beat vigorously, like he was nervous and walking into death's lair.

"Come now, We know its you."

The girl stated, her voice accented an educated woman as a forced giggled was released afterwards. Luzon stepped in swiftly, seeing the two children he expected, yet their expressions seemed something else.

"Who..."

"We may take on the forms of these children, but I hope you haven't forgotten about us... *Luçonia*"

Luzon's head scrambled with thoughts, His every chord of memory flowing from the back of his mind and to the rear. No one had called him by that name in centuries as no one knew of it, Certainly when majority of his records were burned by the spanish...

The only ones who knew were either dead or someone high enough to know him personally through his life.

"Sit down, Luzon. We have many to talk about."

Someone such as...

"Y-yes... Of course."

The two main founders of their land before anyone else had stepped on its soil, that mythically rose to position as onlookers, fate providers and eventually the Gods of their ancestors...

Ophir and Maharlika.

[To Be Continued...]

12. A Brother's Lament.

Smoke filled the room as the stench of it suffocated the air. The smell of alcohol had accompanied the leftovers of the cigars that had been used prior, and was scattered in one place on the ground.

Philip, restless, sat by the couch in his office. The curtains all closed, His hand gripping a glass filled of alcohol, as an empty box of cigarettes layed on the table beneath his foot.

"Tch. Why now."

The news plastered on the screen of his television, a breaking headline could be found anywhere;

' *Corona Virus Outbreak.* '

"They'll handle it, they said. They'll find a way to not cause it to go overseas, they said. What a bunch of lies."

Philip huffed in anger. It had been several days after the meeting and things have been turning for the worse. The president was no help at all, The vice president was in no good terms with the president and none of the senate was getting along, news outlets are getting shut out and every single citizen of the country is protesting about the unrighteous deaths of those killed during the drug hunts...

He couldn't control anything. He didn't have any power.

Even if he had been appointed as temporary country representative, he still had no real access as he did when he was the real country representative.

"Because of you, my life is in turmoil once again. I hope your happy, you little sh*t."

The Filipino stared at the picture frame at the corner cabinet, His

middle finger up and going as he looked up to a black and white picture of Martial from the 70's, the last picture that was ever taken of the older before his disappearance.

Holding on to his position, he immediately faltered, groaning as he placed his arm on his face, covering his eyes. Sighing deeply as he recollect everything from the past.

"*Sigh....*"

He had been neglected throughout his life. Philip's misfortune, as he tells himself, started from the tradegy of his mother's death.

From the abuse of the Spanish Empire, The lover facade of USA, the burning puppetry from the Japanese Empire, the undending list of lost Filipinos in the martial law era, up till the present...

He never once rested. He always fought to survive, to live for others...

But what about him?

Sighing once again, He was too stressed to be overwhelmed with intoxication from the alcohol that he picked up his phone and dialed a number that he didn't knew he could...

Philip was about to press call, but hesitated for a moment.

"Who... Was I about to call?"

He dropped his phone to the ground. Quickly, his vision was darkening, but, he heard the doors creak as he heard a familiar voice followed with a cough...

"Philip? God, Philip, What on earth are you even on to-"

Sigh... Can't you see I'm already grieving enough to hear even a slight of your lecture, much less your voice? He thought, blacking out from reality immediately.

Waking up in a familiar ceiling, Philip slowly sat up as he grabbed his head in desperation on fighting the headache he was

experiencing form drinking too much the night before.

Turning his head on his side, he saw Philia sleeping uncomfortably on the side, sitting down on a chair and merely used her crossed arms as pillows.

"Philia? What are you...?"

As soon as he said that, The female started waking up and composing herself...

"You're awake. That's good."

"What are you doing in my room?"

"What do you think I'm doing? After what you- Just... Drink this."

Weird... She was starting to complain just now, what happened? Being handed a hangover over medicine and water, he looked suspicious at Philia as she was acting weird all of a sudden...

"After you rest a bit, Take a bath. Take the day off, I'll handle the country affairs."

"Huh? Wait-"

Beforw he could say anything, Philia quickly exited the room, leaving the Filipino dumbfounded... Well, it was favourable to him in some way, he gets to rest even for a day...

But why was Philia acting suspiciously? What happened last night?

"Philip? I'm coming in."

Del knocked by the door and came in, looking behind him, as if his eyes followed a strange anomaly.

"Why was Philia coming out of your room? Doesn't she reside in the far east wing?"

"I don't know, Del. Ugh..."

Philip groaned, his headache coming to him every second it got.

"Did you go drinking again, last night?"

"A little too much, yes."

"I did tell you to lessen your alcohol intake, You never listen, do you?"

"Spare me your lecture please."

The younger scoffed, laughing at the older's remark but he couldn't help but pass the thought of what really happened last night.

"Say, Isn't she acting weird?"

"Who?

"Who else? Philia."

He couldn't agree more. But what information was he holding to get an answer to that, none.

"As I was getting to your room, I told her off expecting a comeback as always. But rather than that, she looked at me and never said a word, as she walked away quietly."

Del seemed to have chills by just saying those words, it was as if the female had been possessed as they say.

"Did she say anything to you or anything?"

The older wanted to make sure that the younger was not threatened or was bombarded with any of her daily complaints.

"No... Rather, she said she'll handle the country and I should take the day off."

"What? What on earth... God, I'm getting chills."

Philip was even more curious, what really happened between him and his "sister" that she was acting weird in the morning that they were suspecting that she had come to be possessed by another spirit.

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The clocked ticked as Philia sat behind the country representative's desk. Her pen umoving and unprogessive. It was unlike her to stop working just like this. The events of last night left her restless and wavering as she worried and stressed about it every moment she had.

"I miss my older brother and sister that cared. Ang sakit, Ate. Ginagawa ko naman lahat para maabot ko kayo, pero... Lahat ng paghihirap ko wala lang sa inyo. Bakit ganoon, Ate? Hindi pa ba sapat ang lahat ng ginagawa ko? Di pa ba ako sapat sa inyong paningin?"

[... It hurts, Sister. I tried everything to just reach your level, but... All my hardships are like nothing to you. Why is that, Sister? Is what I am doing not enough? Am I not enough in your sight?]

Those very words stucl to Philia's mind after yesterday night. She didn't knew how to react, she knew that her younger brother was drunk, but to the extent that he couldn't contain everything anymore and just released it all at once that night.

She couldn't handle leaving her brother, yet, she also couldn't talk to him about it. She lost her brother's trust long ago, that Philip's heart stayed away from her and was disinterested in reconciliation... Philia knew that. She knew, but after last night... She really didn't know what to do.

Then, a knock came to the door:

"Ma'am, It's Manila"

"Ah, yes. Come in."

In came Manila, with a new set of documents to review and sign. The city placed the papers on tue desk at once as she continued to review the previous ones she stopped working on earlier.

Manila stood by the side and watched the Filipina quietly do her work. Fast and efficient, That's what the Filipina was known for... But what Manila was seeing was quite the opposite. Sighs and slow reviews. It wasn't like Philia to be like this.

"Is everything alright? Ma'am?"

Philia remained silent for a few seconds before speaking again.

"No. When was the last time I had a proper conversation, without fighting, with Philip and Del?"

"I suppose... None. Except before the Spanish, Ma'am."

She began to think deeply. If it was already that long, what has she been doing to get them back... None.

As she also has her own set of problems, and it had been her personality to shift the blame to others because she couldn't handle it herself.

"How is everything so complicated..."

"Ma'am?"

"Nothing."

As she continued to work, Philia went to grab the small cup of tea she put aside from earlier, and as she was about to lift it up from its plate, the handle of the cup broke.

"Oh my! I'll replace it quickly!"

Manila panicked, quickly heading to the door to fetch another cup but the female stopped him.

"No, It's alright. I'll just hold the cup."

"It's hot?"

"Don't worry. I grew up not just a lady, Manila."

"If you insist then. I'll still grab another cup for you to use."

"Thank you."

The male smiled at her before leaving the room. Philia chuckled as she saw her aide leave a moment, as her eyes went back to the

papers and she noticed that the ink had spilled to the document from her pen...

"Ah... My goodness, This is an important document, Philia. How can you be so careless?"

She sighed, trying to clean up the mess she had made. But as she cleaned, the ink of the parchment had made a symbol of like wings and it sent her back to memory lane.

Philia trembled, her eyes widened like that day;

"Philia. Whatever happens today, whatever you saw. It's merely just your imagination."

"Lies... Lies. Lies! Lies! Imagination? You think what I saw clearly would be an illusion?"

Her hands still trembled in fear. She remembers everything down to the smallest bit. His golden eyes turned crimson red, the raven coloured wings, pale skin and the black cracks that we erupted from his eyes to his skin...

It was... Horrendous.

"It was rumoured that during the war, You are to not engaged with the one who possesses raven wings and eyes of blood. Otherwise, you won't live till the next sunrise."

Her thoughts echoed loudly throughout her mind. There were stories about her brother that had seemed too exaggerated but now she had seen the truth.

It was true. Martial had become an embodiment of a taboo.

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"North, I have a request."

"Yes? Anything, what do you need?"

Martial sat by the balcony. The two had been in a shooting range

within the territory of the Northern Korean Peninsula, and after a few rounds they had sat for a break on the balcony of the manor near them, that North Korea owned.

"You're awfully generous. Anything?"

"Well, you've been here a few days now. I practically monitor everything you do and all you do is a same as you first came here."

"That's true."

The Filipino looked at his hands noticing some abnormalities on it, he immediately closed it into a fist and looked at the Korean.

"I need to borrow a cell from you, a secured and isolated cell. Underground, if you have any."

North Korea turned and looked at the Filipino, who had a genuine look on his face-A look of fear, worry and surrender.

"What are you going to do? I can lend you one but what for?"

"Let's say, I have a condition that requires... Being locked up."

A large urge was coming up to the Korean to ask what was the real reason, but looking at Martial's expression, he dared not ask.

Nightfall soon came into view, and Martial had once again requested that he was going to stay at the cell he wanted for a few days at most.

North Korea never once mentioned his concern as he was surrounded by his country leader's soldiers and was being monitored by them. This was a favourable event for the humans but as Martial was under North Korea, they dared not touch their *'hostage'*.

The korean had quickly closed the doors to the underground prison, to which Martial was in.

"Thank you."

Martial spoke, a faint smile upon his face as he held the bars separating him from the others within the room.

"Are you doing to be alright in there? You are still recovering."

"I'll be fine, Don't worry."

"I'll come down often as I can to check on you. Food will also be brought each meal as well as your medication."

Worry was flooding North Korea's mind. This was the first time he had felt worried for another person, except for his younger brother, South, that he watch from afar...

"Don't worry North. I'll be fine. It's just a few days, we'll see each other soon."

The Korean had no longer seen Martial as a friend nor a life saver, rather, something... Someone more.

"You have to go back to your duties now. Look after yourself alright?"

"I should say that to you."

The two shared a slight laugh before the other left.

North looked back as he was coming up the stairs to the exit. Martial gave a small wave and a smile to reassure the Korean, North Korea have a wave back yey hesitantly as he walked up with his soldiers behind him.

Soon they were all out of view and the click of the doors and its locks were heard echoing throughout the empty halls of the prison, Martial smiled once more as he went up to the chains within the cell.

"I'm sorry, North. Looks like I won't be able to see you in a few days as promised. It's for the better, Martial. Do it for your... Family..."

He quickly took the chains and chained himself up, his wrists and feet all chained up as he threw the keys to the other cell, far from

him.

He then sat on the cold floor, listening to the silence coming into him.

Looking at his hands once again, He wept. His knees collapsed to the floor, his back taking rest on the wall behind him as he sobbed.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry..."

Martial kept repeating those words, his voice's echo mimicing his very emotions as he lost his voice to speak any longer. The cell was dark and the only light coming in was from the moonlight peeking from the high window.

It was frightening as it was isolated.

[To Be Continued...]

13. Philip's Torment.

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Family... That was one thing Philip wanted to experience from his older siblings when he still but a boy. Separated from his mother and father, forced to become a prisoner of a foreigner and trapped inside a culture and language he barely knew, he wanted only his siblings' attention and their love from before... But he never did recieved it back.

"Excuse me... May I request an audience with Ku— I mean, The honorary general-governor?"

"This isn't a place for a kid. Go home."

The youmg Philip would often visit the urban city of Manila just to try and have a small audience with his eldest brother, but all in all, he was rejected everytime. But this didn't discouraged the young boy, as he tried many ways to get in contact with his brother to whom he only knew of the true location.

"You're not supposed to be here, Philip. Go back. You don't belong here."

Everything he did... Failed. Not one was given attention nor reply back.

Until he grew into a naive teen. He was then isolated from his own peers due to his status of being an indio and prisoner of war.

By this time, he had also confirmed a few years prior the location of his only twin sister, he tried to get in contact with her seberal times but the only reply he recieved was;

Don't do anything rash. Stay as you are, and where you are. Remember

your place, Philip.

Again, he was rejected.

It felt like a stab in the heart to hear that he was being reminded of his place while his two siblings were enjoying their high statutes and wealth within the Spanish Empire's territories, while he... He was nothing.

A stir of emotions created his hate, that he made sure to himself that he would someday surpass those two, whatever it took him, he made way for himself to rise.

Yet, he still had children as he married early but widowed as soon as he was given a number of children. However, due to the war he was handling, he had to send his children under to the care of his sister because he knew she wouldn't do anything to children, but a few years later, he recieved a contract of his children being bought and sold to the USA as collaterals.

He lost the little trust he planted in his sister ever since the last time they met... The oath taking. He made sure to confront Philia but the female was nowhere to be seen around that time, and so he swore he will get fury to her.

Then, Marcos Regime came and an opportunity rose. Philip made sure to sought out every little detail to bring down his eldest brother and sister with her backing the eldest. He couldn't do anything the first years, at it was... Clean records...

But then, piles and piles of report amd documents to bring down the both of the older came. Planning and executing his perfectly well sought out build, he felt no remorse left for those two.

Martial instantly disappeared within sight leaving Philia defenceless in the country. Philip immediately stripped Philia of her titles and confined her to a island far from the capital city. He found Del a few years prior and made him his advisor for many years.

It was not easy taking a position that was stolen from his for a long time but Philip managed. He was more relieved to hear that Martial

was pronounced dead with his missing case going on fo years and not a single strand of his hair was found, and so he went quiet for a while.

But not forever, Philia suddenly moved the glass and started climbing up in social rankings and swiftly grabbed the title of a judge in the international court, officially placing their independence and country on the world map. This angered Philip once more.

"I gave you mercy by letting you stay in the country than that bastard that fled on his own and this is how you repay me?!"

Philip confronted Philia in the isolated villa he prepared for tye female in advance for her exile. But he merely talked to no one as Philia was neither lively, emotional... Rather lifeless, her hand clutching her stomach area as if she had lost something important.

He didn't pay that any mind and merely warned her before leaving the female alone.

He began to question whether his decision to come there and confront her was a good idea, now that he seen the condition of his sister... Ragged, tear stained face, messy hair, lifeless eyes, and pale skin... It was as if she wasn't alive but was still standing.

"Why did you go there?"

Del questioned.

"Nothing, I had to check on her every once in a while, especially when she has been making a move since last month."

"I was supposed to report it to you but it seemed that you already saw everything."

Philip turned his head, a pause was quieted as he stared at his brother.

"What is?"

"Philia is going to be checked by a psychologist, she had been

reported to break things and been hurting herself for the past few days."

Philip couldn't process what he was hearing. Her? Why? What made this female go insane to the point that she was like driven to the end point of her life?

With consultation of their doctors, he made sure that Philia was moved back to the Malacañang Palace for close monitoring incase she does anything against them. Though against Del's advice, Philip went through with this, worried for his sister's wellbeing.

He would often sneak gifts and some additions to the female's room to speedup her recovery while she was away. That was when he saw a letter... A letter of annulment of an engagement. More precisely, His sister's engagement to the USA, to which was made back at the commonwealth period.

He couldn't read more as he heard footsteps coming and quickly hid the letter and fled. Philip just assumed that thatbwas the reason that his sister was in that state.

To him, it was... Pathetic.

Then came his engagement to the said country. It was hurried and nonsensical in every way, yet, he needed an ally and supplied for his debt stricken country. So he had to play the sumshine lover of the American to get what he needed from him.

Of course, it wss already backfiring at him and he wanted to quit already. Until the recent elections and he wasn't chosen as country representative as usual.

"What? Then who?! Who is the next country's representative?"

"I—It's his former excellency, Martial Law. Sir."

He threw a glass at the servant, missing and hitting the wall, as he huffed in anger.

"How is a dead person supposed to lead a country when he is dead?! Is that human out of his goddamned mind?"

Philip clenched his teeth and stomped, walking out to the ceremonial hall. He couldn't believe anything at all, he thought the human president simply made a mistake and he was still country representative but no... The moment he saw Philia, who rarely attends any events, attend, his suspicions were getting corrected.

Until, Martial came out of the doors, alive.

His world seemed to crumble upon the sight of the one he wanted to erase, was alive and surrounded by children that seemed to resemble his own... Why...

After everything, why was everything not going his way now?

Del advised Philip to lay low, to look out for whatever may happen to the other two and they would merely be on the sides, being sole survivors...

But still, none of his plans ever got executed properly, and he didn't knew why...

A knock came to his door one night, the voice of his eldest brother came, he didn't exactly hear most of his words but Philip bursted in anger and kicked him out, saying he didn't need anyone and he didn't want to hear anything from him.

His plans continued go get foiled until one day, he came to the harbor to inspect the newly built ships for the navy. He boarded one and was resting on deck when a large wave swept him away to the water below.

"Philip!"

He heard Del shout a minuted before he hit the waters below. It was cold and dim. The fast currents didn't help at all and he was fast nearing the sea floor, the pressure was crushing his lungs and consciousness. No matter how hard he tried to get back up to the surface, it didn't help, he lost hope...

Maybe this was his end for wishing death upon his own family when he wanted his own to get back to how they were before...

Then, Philip saw a large silhouette reaching out to him.

I still want to live... I still want to fix my mistakes...

He also reached out and he felt a strong grip take him up swiftly. The familiar shade of red caught his eyes and the distinct glow of yellow struck his mind, but the moment he realised he was already on the beach front, laying down and seeing the parted skies of light and dark.

The familiar silhouette never left his mind ever since.

Then came the news of Martial's sudden disappearance, only after a few months seated on the country representative's throne.

It was chaos. Every official came and complained about the absence of Martial within a few days due to the surging illness.

"How... How am I suppose to fix your mess?"

Philip contemplated. His stress levels were maxing out, and this was dangerous for him, due to the fact that he was taking meds for a while...

He sat in his office, alone, thinking of all he could do if anything. He doesn't have any power to bestow nor use any authority to control the whole country, now that he is not the country representative sitting.

Looking down on his desk, a drawer by the side caught his attention. He opened it and a mere old note resided there together with a pen...

The same of words resided;

*Swiss account: ********

Transfer of ownership.....

?

To this day, he couldn't figure out what was the transfer of

ownership for. He asked the world bank but they neither gave him an answer nor a reply.

The Swiss account that was written was still a mystery. According to Switzerland himself, he neither has an account like that nor it still exists in his database.

So, what was this?

He scratched his head in frustration and got a bottle of alcohol and jugged on the bottle down to the very last drop. He wanted to forgot his problems, he went to get everything and drank, drank and drank until he blacked out.

The moment he woke up, Philia was acting strange but he didn't mind it seriously as there were more pressing matters at hand and it was adding to his hangovers' headache.

"Are you still drunk?"

"What?"

Del handed him a glass of water and his medication, for him to drink. Though he was warned to not drink a large amounts of alcohol, he still does it to lessen his burdens for a while.

"You still look out of yourself. Tell me, what really is it that made you drink that much? Almost all of your stock is empty today."

"Don't get me started."

Philip drank everything down and coughed with the sudden wash up of his sour throat.

"Hmm, fine."

This was all their relationship was about. If he can't be bothered with it, Del stops asking, even if he, himself, wanted him to force him out to say it, he couldn't.

He couldn't take it out on his only ally and trusted sibling.

"Why don't you ask more?"

"Huh?"

He blurted out unconsciously. Philip' s eyes widened in sudden realisation of his words and looked at Del immediately, expecting a reply.

"Well... I don't want to push you to answer. Especially when we both know our difficulties and past."

"But... You know that this is something I wouldn't do this much."

"I know. But, I know you have a good reason behind it. Besides, It common for old soldiers' to drink their days away!"

Del was correct at some point, especially when they were both veterans of the war. But Philip still felt disappointed at this answer, he was looking for something else.. something more perhaps.

"Alright."

Del saw the sadness come over his younger brother's face and went over and pat his shoulder.

"Hey. If you need something, I'm here."

Philip faintly smiled at his remark, and continued his gaze lowering down to the ground as the older got his things ready for him nearby...

The older soon left Philip to get his duties down by the end of the afternoon, leaving the younger alone in his room for a while. Looking around, it seemed that his lifestyle wasn't as hopeful as it seemed.

Many would want to dethrone him for all the wrong reasons, some wishing for a better life...

But to him, being a country means going through unexplainable pain and misery haunting your every step as one ventures towards the unending tunnel of inescapable doom...

Soon, a knock came to his door as he was done changing his shirt;

"Come in."

"Kuya Philip?"

A little girl's voice came through as a head peeked through the crack of the doors. The lighyt red shade of her hair came through, complementing her yellow eyes.

"Its you."

Philip wondered. He hadn't met any of the children that Martial bought formally but merely coincidences, yet, now he was being approached by one of them.

"I'm sorry, but what is your name?"

"Ah, My name's Terrie, Kuya!"

"Terrie? What a lovely name."

Philip let a faint chuckle leading the girl in and making her sit by a chair facing him as he sat on his bed.

"Tell me. Why have you come here?"

Hurriedly, the little girl took her hand and searched something in her pockets. Her wondering face made Philip smile as he recall something of the past...

"Here! Papa said to give it to you incase of national emergency."

"Papa..? Martial?"

Terrie nodded, giving Philip a small box that fitted right in his hand. Taking it gently from the young one was confusing but he took the initiative to open it.

"A key?"

"Ahh! That's the key to Papa's office in our house!"

"House? To where you were staying before?"

Once again, the girl nodded, her smile coming up to her eyes.

"Why would he give me this, though?"

"Papa said even if he can't fix his own faults, he could at least lessen the burden of the one that he wronged."

Wronged? This doesn't give me a full explanation. Philip though for a while before carefully examining the key and its box.

Looking at it carefully, there was nothing but the key inside, but something looked strange to say the least...

Terrie stayed quiet even if she was looking around the room. Then, she stopped and got something from her other pocket, giving it to Philip quickly.

"And this is?"

A shard? It seemed like one as it shining with the light in different colours...

"From me. A fragment of a country."

In shock, he almost dropped the fragment on the floor. How could a child carry such a valuable thing, much more posses it?

"H-How..."

"Papa has been collecting these for the past few years now. I know this is dangerous for a country, so I'm asking you for a help."

"Help?"

"Papa is dying. He wants to end it himself but he can't because of us, so he's prolonging his life with these fragments..."

Prolonging a life? That's possible?

"Papa... is slowly being torn apart by his own power and he won't ask for anyone's help."

Philip was processing too much information that he couldn't take all of it at once. Why was a child asking for his help? What was these fragments? And how does one prolong a life?

"Wait..."

If Martial is prolonging his life with this... Doesn't that mean he is fighting death? Fighting his own Fate? Meaning, he was already supposed to be dead but not?Why?

He thought and thought but couldn't get an answer, as several questions flooded his mind over and over again. Terrie worried look got to him, a child of another was asking his help, to which he couldn't do to his own child... He couldn't refuse... He shouldn't.

"Can... Can you explain to me in detail..?"

"I can't answer that, Kuya Phil. But I know someone who can..."

"Who? Tell me. I'll summon and talk to them!"

Terrie shook her head, the worry on her face merely sulked more as her eyes dig itself to stare on the ground below...

"Tito CPP can only answer that."

"CPP? Your older brother? The one Martial raised?"

"No... Tito CPP."

Then he realized. The one he wanted to bribe, the one he showed his other side when it came to silencing people... That CPP...

He quietly cursed to himself. Why did he even do that.

Philip was to ask another question when he heard a footstep outside his door together with a knock, came a voice famliar tp him.

"Sir, A guest has come for you."

Manila spoke through from behind the door and not coming in.

"Ah yes, thank you. I'll be right out."

He looked at the little girl infromt of him as he spoke, but he didn't see her move an onch from her previous position rather she seemed focused and more quiet at that moment.

When the footsteps became distant, then Terrie moved from her spot to look at her uncle, to whom she hasn't officially recognized.

"Kuya. Only you can know of this, and only you I asked for help. If you want to find Tito CPP, please find me."

The girl them hurriedly ran to door, but as she was getting out, she looked back once more to Philip, her gaze focused and unfazed, unlike of a child of her age...

"Please... Don't hate my Papa so much."

She then left and closed the door behind her. Philip was dumbfounded and shocked that a child like that was mature more than he was, maybe he should cut back on the alcohol intake or maybe his medication, he didn't know. All he knew was how to comply with this child's request.

"*Sigh*... How do I accept this request?"

He laid down on the bed ome last time before meeting his guest on the drawing room of the Malacañang palace. Before entering tye room, he thought about the request again and them Philia's recent action and made him think, but he brushed it off and entered the room, only to be greeted with disappointment.

"Philip! My dearest Philip."

"USA... You're here..."

Philip's tone of disappointment wes evident even to the American, seeinh how Philip avoided his gaze and seated at the opposite direction of him with a dead expression

"What do you want?"

"A new agreement."

Philip scoffed, he really didn't like this person infron of him in the first place, he was always wondering why he accepted his engagement to him. But then again, it was for business...

"For?"

"Cooperation for the COVID vaccine."

His eyes widened. Right... He also had to fix the problem with the pandemic and the rising cases in his country. More problems to deal with...

"What's the catch?"

"Free vaccines for your people, if you invest in my research in discovering a cure."

Philip had so much going on his mind that he couldn't really think straight, he blurted out questions, answers and complains tat he couldn't remember nor imagine he'll say but he did. As soon theit meeting ended, Philip faced the American with a stern face.

"I supposed I'll see you when I can."

The Filipino merely hummed in agreement. The other was to take their hand for a kiss of goodbye but Philip retracted his hand and walked away. As he rubbed his temple, thoughts of evrything flodded his mind all at the same time and he couldn't keep up eith his thought process that he didn't knew he ended up at Martial's old office from when he evicted him during the Marcos Era.

Dusty and uncleaned as it is, it remained frozen in time, except for a few things.

He walked in and immediately his thoughts silenced with a mere look at the old desk of his older brother. Documents left untouched, glass, picture frames, pen and ink.

Circling around the desk, he found a small hole to which looked like a keyhole. He then took out the small box that Terrie gave him a few hours ago and tool out the key, tryimh to fit it inside, it actually worked and the table revealed a secret compartment on the

side... A cabinet perhaps.

He opened it and found a large antique box that was left unlocked. In it were letters and somehow some gifts that looked old, he started to read the letters one by one and tears streamed down his face as he read the letters.

Dearest Philip. Its your Brother Martial...

[To Be Continued...]

14. A Curse or a Punishment?

[Why do you strangle yourself in this cell? All alone you sat by, as your body consume what is left of you.]

The voices of his head gather as they crowded. Peacefulness finally ending as they started rambling and talking within the very consciousness that created and kept them for years.

"Keep it together..."

He whispered. Very so silently that it bounced off the wall of the cell's silence that resonanced inside the building. His head hanging by his side as it rested by a wall beside him, the corner in which he stayed was comfortable... to say the least.

Bounded hands and chained feet weren't the main issues here. But the slowness of the impending doom awaiting his time in that cell.

"Keep it together..."

He whispered once more, it felt like hours as he continued to say the very same words over and over, as he felt a burning sensation on his own body, as his heart pounded against the wall of his chest he could feel every single moment burning inside him.

[No one has come for you. No one will save you. You gave and give, nothing is left.]

"Quiet. You do not know everything..."

His heart and chest ached in pain, twisting his body into a swirl of burning sensation with each motion he takes. Blood started to bleed out of his nose as water came down from his head and eyes...

"Control it. Keep it together, Martial!"

Closing his eyes, trying to endure the pain spreading throughout his body. Cracks started forming from his right ear, coming up to his right eye. As he opened his eyes, his right eye no longer bared the bright golden touch of the sun, rather a much darker colour of gold surrounded by black.

He banged his head towards the wall, in hopes that it will knock himself out unconscious. In which case, it did.

"You shouldn't have done that. You'll bleed to death."

"Isn't that what you both want? An anomaly of your blood is finally dying, You and the great Maharlika should rejoice."

His consciousness laid bare, empty and soulless of any fond memories, rather, filled with hauntings and terror of old doings. Martial sat at the center, looking aback at the one who had just entered his mindscape.

"Rejoice isn't-"

"I once thought of both of you like Gods, highly exalted and respected. I thought of that once, now I see you are nothing to what I perceived."

The tone of voice from him changed from soft to domineering. Aura also had changed to suit his change of voice pattern, He no longer looked back at his ancestor and looked at a direction to which emptiness resided.

"Martial..."

"As I wanted change more than anything. Stability and Reformation, I sought for a better nation to be built, only to find myself in shoes I shouldn't have been on. A Dictator."

A shadow started to form behind his back. A shadowy form of dark wings resembling that of a raven's, yet burnt and decorated with embers with it, hands staining and coloured with a gradient of black as it faded along his blue fingers...

"Had I listened to my brother Del, should I have led another way?

No. Philia's advice? She wasn't in her right mind to think about politics with her unborn child. Philip..."

He paused, Martial thought about for a moment before he continued. The adversary of his own commencing before him as he gather himself to say his words before he was consumed by his own hatred and guilt...

"Dearest sweet Philippines, No matter what I said, you believed another. My brother, my sweet youngest brother, how you've grown. Indeed I am an anomaly, both in blood and in family."

Ophir stood still, seeing his own flesh and blood get consumed by a curse that they didn't intend to put upon the man. Driven by madness and Fear, they watched as this once innocent young boy, turn into a war torn victim, blamed by the many for justice he couldn't provide.

The mindscape of Martial started to fluctuate. Pouring of endless memories carrying fear, sorrow, guilt, helplessness and anger scattered throughout, filling the young man's head with countless reasons, excuses, to put himself on end.

It was collapsing.

Years of facade and built up sorrows, now crumbling down.

"Martial! We can still fix—!"

However, It was quite too late. Cracks formed, his eye no longer held the beauty of the sun before, his hair more crimson than it was, as he became more pale and more of what he looked like back in the times of war.

And like a glass, pieces of different coloured shards slowly started to wear off his body as the black like smoke started to dissipate, revealing two raven coloured wings with one of it burnt on its tips and the other perfectly fine.

"Martial! Don't push me away! I'll find a way-!"

Slowly turning to his direction, Ophir saw the blank stare given to

him by the other. The horrifying cracks on the side of his face, dominated with black marks almost entirely took up Martial's right side...

The Filipino never said another word as the ancient entity was forced out of his unconscious mind, swirling with the long suppressed thoughts and feelings of the fallen general.

With this happening inside his brain, it was also physically happening to the Filipino. That his country spirit swirled out of control and broke through the underground cell's roof, alarming the north korean officials.

Watching in horror, North Korea stood in his office frozen in place as he watched. He had simply forgotten of Martial for a while due to the surging pandemic that was recently going on.

"Martial..."

As soon as he realized that his "prisoner" was in danger, he spent no time to waste and burst out of his office and into the corridors. His soldiers stunned yet alerted with the events that they were all around, doing everything they could to get to the source of their problems; the underground prison.

North Korea passed by his human representatives, only to ignore them as he ran faster and faster just to get to Martial Law.

"Martial! Answer me!"

Opening the heavy doors to the underground facility, he could immediately smell the iron like stench that filled the air. However, with the sudden burst like explosion from the facility, He never once considered that this was Martial's country spirit until he saw the latter...

The walls tinted in black, cracks of red and yellow scattered and branched from the latter's behind. Standing in the middle, Martial stood with his back next to the wall, his expression gravely gave anything as he stare blankly down.

The side of his face barely recognizable with the amount of cracks

surfacing and taking hold of that side. Black liquid mixed with blood flowed down to his chin as it droop to the floor below.

"Please... Leave, I cannot-"

The words of the other woke him up from his trance. The feeling of fear and loneliness could be felt within the surging country spirit as North Korea stepped near the body of Martial.

"Martial... Mar, I need you to wake up, alright?"

Softly as he could whisper it towards the other. North Korea had no choice but to wake up the other as their power would soon consume half of their base if not stopped immediately. Yet, he didn't want to hurt someone he was indebted to...

"Wake up! Wake up Martial!"

North Korea shook Martial's shoulder, in attempts to wake him up. He could already hear his soldiers coming up from the upstairs door that he had left opened in desperation in getting to Martial Law earlier.

"Mar! Please, Wake up. If you don't, I do not know what they'll do to you!"

Slowly, the steps of the soldiers started to descend, As North Korea became more desperate.

"Martial! Please!"

He could just cling onto what little hope he could have by just shouting his name and shaking the other's body, fearing that his officials would take him and use the Filipino as a weapon or even a hostage for his country to use on. He didn't want that.

"Martial, Listen to me. You need to wake up now, alright? Yo8 have to!"

Cupping his hands on the face of the other, he faced Martial towards his own, gritting his teeth at the empty expression the Filipino gave. Martial' s facial features were no longer what he

could remember, sure it had been a few months or so, yet, this was nothing he could've imagined.

"Wake up, Martial. I'll beg if you need me to, don't give me such a sorrowful expression. Wake up, please."

As the footsteps became more louder and clearer, his thin cuamve of hope was slowly fading away. No signs from the other was coming out and responding to him, it was all becoming dangerously hopeless, until;

"Where... Are you?"

"Martial! I'm here! I'm here. Snap out of it and face me, please!"

North Korea them turned his eyes to Martial's trembling hand, amd held it tightly.

"I'm here. Wake up now... I'm not going to go anywhere, just wake up for me, please."

Slowly, the rampage of Martial's country spirit was calming down and going back to its host, giving more hope to the Korean, evem if meant just seconds until his soldiers entered the cell.

"최고 사령관?"

[Supreme Commander?]

A soldier questioned North Korea, however he didn't turn his back to face them.

"Stay right there! 가까이 다가오는 자는 모두 머리가 날아갈 거야, 알겠지!"

[Stay right there! Anyone who comes close will have their heads flying, you hear me!]

Fear overcame the soldiers as they huddled onto the wall far from the cell. They could sense their country radiating his own country spirit as a measure and warning towards them.

"North... Where are you?"

"I'm here, Martial. I'm here, Can you hear me?"

North Korea tightened his grip on the Filipino's trembling hand and kept his reassuring and soft tone towards Martial to not pressure the other, fully knowing that he didn't knew what he was doing... More likely having a panic attack.

"It hurts... So much."

"I know, I know. Breathe, alright. Breathe for me."

Slowly but surely, Martial's country spirit calmed down and went back inside him. However, it still affected its host with extreme pain and parts of numbness in his body, which made the Filipino shed tears.

"I can't... I can't handle it. Its too much."

"I know... You don't have to keep it in anymore."

North Korea let Martial lean on his shouldee to cry and he, somehow, show comfort to gje other by whispering comfortinh words such as: "It's alright" and "I'm here if you need me".

He didn't mind if his uniform became messed up or even soaked with Martial's tears. If he could appease the Filipino's worries, even just by a little percentage, then its fine.

The quiet sobs soon faded out as Martial passed out within minutes of coming out of an attack. North checked if the Filipino had a stable pulse before pulling him close and wrapping the other's arm around him to stand.

He carefully took the weight of the other and carried them both back to his office that was already connected to his bedroom. Ignoring his officials, soldiers, and even human representatives' confusion and complaints on the way back.

Giving an order to everyone;

"예고 없이, 심지어 초대받지도 않은 채 내 방에 들어오는 사람은 누구나 총살당할 것입니다. 나는 내 자신을 분명히합니까?"

[Who ever enters my chambers unannounced or even uninvited will be shot in sight. Do I make myself clear?]

North Korea's authoritative voice echoed throughout the minds of those who feared him, and scorned those who belittle his presence as a country.

He closed his doors to anyone, be it in his office or his bedroom whilst Martial rested on his bed. Fully knowing that only his bed would both give the Filipino comfort and security needed for his recovery... From whatever illness he was suffering from.

"Is this why you are taking medication back then? Back when, in the darkness of night in your place?"

He looked down, meticulously setting the layers of blankets on Martial. Removing the other's tight hair tie, revealing the long, luscious crimson hair of the Filipino going down the pillow as he laid down the other's head, gently.

"How inconsiderate. You still have such healthy hair but look at your body, barely surviving. What am I going to do with you?"

He sighed, not in worry or anything but in irony that someone such as him was caring about someone else when he was deemed to not care for anyone but himself.

Noticing that the latter wasn't waking up and was deep into their slumber, he went out to prepare for whatever meant necessary for his benefactor or patient. Be it food, beverages, medicine or even things to keep the other busy.

All for the sake of repaying his debt to Martial.

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Groaning in pain, his head split open an ache that scattered throughout his head. His vision blurry as he was greeted by a striking light.

"You're awake?"

"What? Where?"

Philip looked around, he wasn't even near or close to what he expected. Countless trees and the highlands quickly caught his attention, facing forward he noticed he was on the road, inside a car.

"Good afternoon, Tito!"

Terrie's voice rang from the back seats as he turned to confirm. He could only turn his head in confusion, seeing that the man he drove away for bribery the other day was driving the very same car they were on.

"Now, don't get confused. This was your niece's idea, not mine."

PKP-1930 sarcastically failed a joke. Confusion merely rose up from there, seeing that they weren't just in any road but a mountain road. He turned everywhere and as he suspected, he didn't really know where he was...

"Where are you taking me?"

"Calm down. I'm not taking you anywhere to dispose of you or anything, rather, I would've done that early, if Terror Law wasn't here."

They heard a giggle from the back seat responding to PKP's remark, as Philip arranged himself in his seat, finally regaining his energy to even understand what was going on around him.

"In all seriousness, I'm taking you to where you should've known, however, didn't because *He* didn't want anyone to know."

"Stop with the riddles, PKP. Who is He and where are we?"

PKP stared on the road, a few minutes of silence as they drove along the empty road passing by some houses before disappearing into the trees once again.

"Martial. You've read his letters, didn't you?"

A serious tone came out of PKP's mouth, as hia aura changed instantly, turning his rear view to Terrie as he watched the girl play with her own as she took some things from her bag.

"What about those letters? Seems like nonsense."

"However seem like nonsense to you, those letters contained what Martial couldn't tell any of you, rather send to any of you. As every single one of those letters never made it to any of your hands."

Philip raised a brow, This wasn't persuading him at anything and didn't even seem persuading at all. Martial? Writing letters for him? Preposterous!

"I can't change your mind now, but let's see what you'll say later."

"Is that a threat?"

PKP remained silent, as his foot pressed forward into the gas, making the car faster that what is prescribed by the highway patrol.

"Hey! Slow down!"

He didn't listen as they raced through the empty roads, soon reaching a sharp turn to which PKP showed no signs of slowing down.

"PKP! Are you trying to kill us?"

Again, no response as they rapidly swiftly went straight into the curve without turning. Philip closed his eyes, expecting a loud crash and his body flying after hitting the curve and the car flying into the ravine.

However, as he opened his eyes once again, he felt nothing like it.

"As I said, I would've killed you earlier if I had the chance, but I wouldn't do so with Martial's daughter in the back."

Looking around, PKP was driving mkre slowly as they entered a

more deserted type of road with some bumps and cracks present with each mile they reached. The trees were more think and mist were starting to cloud up the distance.

"How? Where? There was a curve, There was no opening to that? How on Earth did we end up here and not dead?"

"It's an illusion. A camouflage created by Martial since the early 1980's."

"What?"

As the road started to get smooth, Philip could feel that they were approaching closer to the place that they were going to.

"Get ready, We're close."

A loud pounding of his heart could be heard as his nervousness couldn't be contained. He didn't know where he was being taken or even why he was being taken there.

Soon, A pointed roof came into view and in seconds a closed gate with the design of the colonial period.

"Out. This is where we end our journey in the car."

"What?"

"Come on Tito! There's no harm here!"

Following Terror Law's lead, they all stood by the gate, looking at the inside seemingly observing it as the mist grew thin.

"Are we going in?"

"Terrie."

Confused, they watched as the little girl with them held out her hand as if she touched a wall. A glowing yellow light seemingly came out of her hand and a invisible barrier reacted to her touch as it disabled itself revealing the mansion in perfect shape as the mist dispersed quickly.

"Now, we enter."

PKP opened the gate infront of them as he led them all inside, soon opening the front doors to reveal a vintage type of living room mixed with modern equipment inside.

"This is...?"

"Welcome to our house, Tito Philip! Papa and my siblings were raised here."

Philip looked around the house as he entered. The vibe and feel around the building felt familiar yet disheartening at the same time. By then, his eyes came upon the portrait of Martial, holding two toddlers in his hands with three more teens beside him.

"Here. Drink, I know you're thirsty by now."

PKP handed him a glass of water as he agreeably accepted it and drank it in one gulp.

"Why did you bring me here?"

He questioned. He didn't even ask to come there or even wanted to know anything connected to his eldest brother, all he wanted to know was why he was pulled into their problems.

"Follow me. Terrie, stay here, I'll just show your uncle around, is that alright."

"Okay!"

PKP went straight up on the stairs with Philip just following behind as his eyes wander around the halls and intricate designs that caught his eyes on each corner.

The upstairs were dark and cold as they set foot on the last step that the stairs presented. PKP said no word and continued walking and stopped by a locked door that seemed aged and vintage.

"The key. It's in your left pocket."

"Ah, Right."

He hurriedly felt around his pocket and quickly got the key out of his hidding place and gave it to PKP, however the other didn't accept it.

"You do it. From here on out, You have to be the one to enter and leave this room."

Confused but understood the situation, Philip could see the seriousness on the other's face as he went to open the door with key in hand. He twisted the doorknob as he let the key slide in the keyhole and open its lock.

"Aren't you going to come in?"

"No. This is between you and your brother. I have no right to interfere any longer."

"What are you-"

Within seconds he was in a different room, No other person in sight, just him and the antiques in the room. Looking around there wasn't seem anything different, other than the objects on the shelves that represented the olden times and books that were published around the colonial period...

A room of two, connected in the middle as a large desk sat infront of a window with a vintage sofa laid rest on its front. Papers of age with writings laid silently on the desk that seemed of little importance.

"What's the purpose of this? I don't even know why I'm here in the first place."

Sighing in disbelief, Philip flopped down to the chair behind the desk, feeling his phone down his pockets but when he realized it was not there, he groaned in anger.

"What the hell am I even supposed to do?"

His eyes wander around, looking for clues. None caught his eyes

until he saw the unruly way the drawer on the desk was opened, like it was previously opened yet hastily closed and didn't close all the way.

Out of curiosity, he opened it all the way, just to see dozens of bottles of medicine, including of used and unused amounts of syringes with some emptied and some aged yet full. This sent a an emotional shock to Philip, seeing that this wasn't just medicine, but forbidden and banned ones...

He panicked...

"What is this? What on Earth is this things doing here?!"

He searched for more in the drawers below and surely enough did he panicked even more. Countless and limitless amounts of the same medication, piled inside the drawers as if it was a part of a hoard.

He wanted to throw up at the huge and unimaginable amount of drugs that he banned years ago reside inside this very room that is placed within the house that Martial lived infor decades and seeing that some were freshly opened, it seemed that someone was actively digesting this drugs.

Philip didn't just ban this drug for being a dangerous medication for humans and countryhumans alike, but because it drives both beings insane and mentally unstable, that anyone who digested this drug had died under unknown preferences, killed, or destruction of ones body and mind, leading to the UN's worldwide ban.

"Where did he get this. Why did he get this? How is he still alive? How, How, How?!"

Philip just couldn't think of an answer, until he saw two other bottles of medication mixed with the first batch he saw:

"Pain killers? Anti-depressants? What... Are these for?"

Deep within the drawer lies a tattered notebook, onto which Philip slowly got out and started reading its contents with his heart beating with anxiety upon seeing tye familiar hand writing of

Martial.

□□□□□□□□□

March of 1990, Log one. Supposed that I had just returned to Motherland after being exiled along with the Marcoses, this is the old mansion of Uncle Llanera that he supposedly couldn't use before his death. I suppose I'll see what I can do in the meantime.

June of 1990, Log two. I must've forgotten for a while, however I'll log into this in a month's time again to keep this updated. Month 4 in isolation, seems not fun like anticipated, considering that I am completely surrounded by trees and the mountain ranges, beautiful truly, yet its still quite a mew experience to not talk to anyone but yourself in the mirror. I've planted crops, started a farm of some sorts just to keep by rations, thanks for Itay for teaching me farming in an early age. There's electricity and water in the house, so there's no worry about that. Other than some fixing needed in the attic and roof, a bit of country spirit was a help...

July of 1990, Log three, I got in contact with my son, NDF, in some way. They're being hunted by my younger brother Philip, well considering the path they chose its not a surprise, but I still worry about those trouble makers. Still great to have someone to talk to even if I can't hear their voice and only through radio and morsecode.

August and September of 1990, Log four and five. I forgot to log in August. I heard that Philip took command of the whole country with Del as his right hand. That's good, Del is a great choice, however, I haven't heard about Philia for a while. My poor sister, hope she is faring well despite her recent miscarriage. Technology is somewhat getting upgraded with each year that I had to change the interior of the house to match the new technology coming into the mansion. I also had to sneak outside in my human form to just see how everythinh is going, and somehow, Philip is doing a great job at his ruling. If only I could say that to him personally, I would...

November of 1990, Log six. My skin is starting to show cracks... And I'm quickly losing control of my power. I bought some medicine, they work in some way in keeping my countryspirit tame, however the cracks on my skin is progressing quite slowly but hurts badly, I think I can still

hide it with some country spirit, I guess. I hope I resolve it soon.

January of 1991, I couldn't do it. Its growing more and more that its taken me hostage in my own body. I had made a deal with two ancient entities whem I was a boy to safe guard my family's future. In exchange that I bring them to peace and their fragments would be found and be burried with the honor they couldn't get on their deaths. It had been years since then and I haven't fulfill my end of the deal, I suppose this is what I get for playing with fire.

April of 1993, It takes control of my body. I can't even control of my own actions, just like when I was rampaging in the fields of blood back in the war. That wasn't me. It wasn't me that you fear. I've done what I can to supress and hide these cracks. It hurts so much, I can't go out and ask for help, otherwise they'll kill me. I still haven't apologised to anyone, how else can I be forgiven if I am this pathetic?

December of 1994... I tried to cut my arm to reduce the pain by the forming cracks. It felt... Nothing really. I thought it would at least bring something out from my chest. Nothing. Pathetic.

October of 1996, I hanged myself by the chandelier on the living room, just so when someone comes, they'll be reminded that someone once tried to live here in isolation but failed miserably. But, The three troublemakers found this mansion and put a stop to it. I have locked myself in this room for quite a while now, they've been knocking me to come out and eat. What's the point of eating if something else is eating me inside?

February of 2000, I took a walk around the nearby city. Much has changed from my time, no one came to look my way as I was in human form, I came to exchange the old money from the old times and certainly they bank still accepted them to be exchanged. I got to watch the news from the tellers view, Its good to see my siblings participating in their own ways in the government without me hindering them. Also, I picked up two orphan children, they were in an allyway with some bloodied bodies surrounding them. They were alive but not breathing, It weird how they are so much human but radiate so much countryspirit, I took them in, in which case who would adopt these children in a crime scene that seemed staged but flawed in execution and ended up dying?

May of 2000, I named the two children Terror Law, the girl, amd Terror Bill, the boy. They are twins unfortunately, they are a both terrors to be handled even if they are stuck in a loop of hibernation. However, when carried the boy, a crack from my arm healed and restored it to its former glory, surprising as it is, he responded as he went back to sleep. I couldn't be more happy as I did earlier.

December of 2009, I felt it, deep in my heart I knew I couldn't be contained. I had to chain myself by the basement wall and put on a mask. I felt the activation and implementation of the law, of martial law. I don't know where but its scares me to think I'll hurt the children. I already left them under PKP's care yet, what will happen if these chains would not hold me for long? I'm scared. By this, I could already talk to my ancestors as if they had been watching me this whole time during our deal. My Death will be the answer to their unfinished deal.

June 30 of 2016, I'll be heading out, to claim a deal with the newly elected human president of the country. This will be the last log I:ll be putting inside this notebook. I believe I've left what I had to write and remember, may this serve as a reminder and only memory of me that I tried to fix things, that I couldn't and failed several times. This is the last time, I'll write in this book...

Goodbye Martial, It has been an eventful 500 years. But I believe we've lived far long enough, its time for our last adventure to commence and soon end. Goodnight to that once lost boy.

□□□□□□□□□

Such logs in a journal wasn't able to bring a stop to Philip's tears as they started to fall little by little by the time he finished the long journal of his eldest brother, Martial.

He sobbed and cried as he tightly held the journey to his chest taht contained every single struggle, hopes, dreams, emotions, unsaid thoughts and regrets of Martial throughout the years he spent in isolation. An old picture from back in the 1890's was preserved and delicately placed on the back of the journal, reminding the Filipino more than this was the first and last picture of them altogether before they all broke apart.

It just showed a reminder that they all ended up strayed from the path that their parents tried to save them from, loneliness.

Sobbing, Philip made his way to the other side of the room and to a closed door. The journal briefly stated that behind that door was something of importance to Martial amd He only wanted to know... Evem if he desperately needed answers, he couldn't bare to barge into something important to his brother without being careful after reading the journal.

"I'm... Coming in."

Philip softly said. Twisting the door knob and letting himself in slowly as he held the journal tightly near his chest.

A room empty of furniture but bountiful in items preserved and carefully well taken care off as if magic was flying around the room and keeping the room at the right temperature. He slowly walks in, passing by picture frames that featured him in old newspapers with large headlines, however Philip paid no mind, as his eyes focused on a single item.

A worn out dress displayed at the corner with a note pinned with Philia's name on it, Del Pilar's sword back when he was young general displayed at the other corner, Katipunan's old scarf placed inside a glass container, Perla's old hair pin delicately placed in another container display... However, Philip ignored all of this and came to the middle of the room where a small table rested and several letters were rested there.

He couldn't contain his trembling tears as he let it all out at that moment, realizing that they weren't the only ones suffering from the consequence of time, but also Martial. They ignored and scarred the other from their sights that they didn't realise that no matter what, Martial supported them from the sidelines despite them opposing him or making him the villain on theor story.

It was just... They still haven't heard the other side of the story yet. Now he does and he couldn't contain the emotions flowing out.

Old preserved letters of Philip, Philia and Del Pilar laid at that

table, with the gifts that they sent along with it, that Philip knew Martial rejected from when he sent it to him. Turns out, he didn't...

So... Why did they stray from each ither's path then? What was the real reason? *Who* was the reason?

[To Be Continued...]

15. Fear and Realization

Quiet, Endless darkness. As if floating into nothingness, the light seems to be fading from the surface as a translucent wall moving around covers the light above. Breathing was pointless as water seemingly came flooding inside his lungs.

' What...? '

Martial looked around, his body seemingly transparent as if being a ghost. Looking around, seeing that he was underwater. A figure floated, rather, drowned beside him and showed no sign of movement... yet, Their very own structure was all too familiar.

' Isn't this my body—?'

Putting his hand upon his own body, it felt cold, however, It passed through as if nothing was there. He panicked. Seeing that the other's structure was completely consumed with the dark cracks that he feared

"No—"

Then, He realized... His voice wasn't coming out. Like a blockage was promiment inside his throat, he was helpless nonetheless, seeing that his other body gets swallowed up by the abyss of below and pulling the other down swiftly.

' No! '

Waking up with a start, Martial looked around, Darkness welcoming his gaze. Trembling, He looked down to see his hands trembling as well as his whole being...

Sweat going down his whole face and back, as he gasped for air... He didn't know what he dreamt about nor what he was doing in his own sleep...

Martial only knew that it was a memory he purposely had forgotten long ago.

He looked around once more, To see himself inside an office not his own, yet so familiar to the touch. As his vision cleared up, so did his panic subsided, grasping the security that the room had given him just for a moment, as he was alone.

The clean and warm sheets cover him as his hand was carefully bandaged, as if he had been injured prior to his awakening. In addition to that, every cramp and ache of his body began to come and show itself to him.

"You're awake. You slept like a log, quiet and unmoving."

Though a little blurry on his side, Martial could tell that this familiar voice belonged the the Korean that he saved previously, coming closer and sitting near him.

"Your eyesight may be blurry. It's a side effect from being in a coma for a day, in addition, the medicine that you took."

"Medicine? What happened?"

He felt lightheaded on the events that happened before that. His vision was not straight and blurry on all sides, all he could do was listen to the voice that ranted in front of him.

"You don't remember your outburst just yesterday? Well, That's unfortunate. You almost blew half my base to bits."

"What? Is that why I'm in this bed?"

"Probably. What do you think? Resting and recovering on my bed? Is it nice?"

At that slight mention, Martial panicked to get off of bed, as he tried to make his surroundings familiar even though everything

wasn't at first touch.

"Calm down. I deliberately put you here, stop panicking."

"How can you bring me here? Where am I? Take me back to the cell!"

The Filipino got up on his weakened legs and tried to stand up, ultimately failing as North Korea caught his arm for support on time before he hit the ground.

"I'm not taking you back there. You are to stay here and recover, do I make myself clear?"

"No. Take me back."

"Don't be stubborn, Martial. I'm not letting you go back to a place where you plan to kill yourself."

Flinching, North's guesses were correct by Martial's body suddenly reacting to his words.

"Why? If I knew you were planning such a thing, I wouldn't have let you go there. Why didn't you tell me you're sick? Even more, being consumed by your own country spirit?"

The Filipino remained silent, as if his silence wasn't answering the other's worries and complaints. North Korea already knew that Martial was sick of a once-in-a-lifetime illness by country humans through his own doctor, but he wanted to know the truth from the person themself. He needed to know from Martial's lips.

"Speak to me, Martial. What is going on with you?"

He still remained silent. Martial didn't want anyone to know, considering that he previously had an experience of being questioned like this, however, didn't turn out well.

"I can't... Please, just take me back."

"No. Until you can tell me what's going on with you, You are not to get out of this room, unless I say so."

"What? You can't do that! I'll hurt you—"

"Then tell me what's happening? Is it that hard to tell me? I'm worried, Martial, to tell me the truth."

North Korea's voice radiated a sigh of sadness and worry as he spoke, Martial could tell even if he couldn't temporarily see anything.

"I saw you... Yesterday, you were in great pain. Too much pain, to even bear to see by anyone else. Your body filled with cracks, as your power rampaged like its own entity... "

Martial listened closely, he was stunned to hear this from North Korea but just decided to hear him out even for a few moments, due to the fact that, he was the one that caused the other's worry.

"Tell me, Is it wrong to restrict you from going back there, when I saw the injuries, the pain you inflicted upon yourself, the cracks, the spirit, all of it. Tell me? Is it wrong to fear for the one who saved and help me in time of need?"

"I'm sorry... I wasn't thinking clearly. I didn't consider your feelings."

"Not only my feelings, Martial. You also put my position in disarray, If I weren't the country representative here, We both could've been executed on the spot."

Martial could only gulp in silence, lowering his head in guilt as he listened to every word the Korean listed to him about his mistakes in tye previous day.

"However, It did bring you here."

"Yes?"

"I can easily monitor you now. Therefore, whatever you do is to be approved of me beforehand, that means, no trying to die or anything related to it whatsoever."

Feeling another hand gently take his'. Martial didn't waver to let

North Korea examine his hand and whatever it is that the other wanted to do, considering that he was greatly indebted to the other... It seemed that the Korean didn't want to push into that topic more and create an interrogation like scene to quickly change the topic.

"Enough of that. How are you? Anything unusual, new, or even hurting?"

The Filipino just shook his head in disagreement, hearing a hum from North Korea seemed to give him relief that the other didn't say anything or he would have sunk his head in shame much farther.

"Good. It's still quite early for your next medication and I have a meeting in a few minutes, Would you be alright for 30 minutes as I attend my agenda? I'll be back afterwards."

"Please, Don't worry about me. I'm already guilty that you're taking care of me, despite being a hostage and your busy schedule—"

"Nonsense! I'm merely repaying my debt to you. I'll call it even between us, alright?"

North Korea then took Martial's other hand and shook it gently, sealing a deal they didn't make, however, made. The Filipino could only just go with the flow as his sight slowly return to him as the Korean left for his meeting.

Yet, Before North Korea left;

"Ah, North..."

"Hmm?"

"Thank you... For this."

Martial could partially see the Korean turn up a faint smile as he left the room, closing the doors behind him as he walked away with his steps fast receding.

However, as he hear the steps getting far away, It couldn't be helped as his heart pounded against his chest. Embarrassment? Why

would he be? A fever? His ears may be quite warm but it wasn't a fever, A feeling of excitement? Suppose he was sick with all this abnormality happening to him all at the same time.

He just didn't know the words to describe such a feeling of fuzziness.

Meanwhile, North Korea had just arrived at the meeting place of his appointment. His stern expression and strict posture came with him as he entered the hall with a line of soldiers behind him.

He had been called and forcibly invited to attend the Congress meeting even though their government hadn't changed for the last several years. However, he was called in for the incident with Martial law previously.

"위대한 조국의 최고령도자와 최고사령관님께 영광을 드립니다!"

[Glory to both the Supreme Leader and the Supreme Commander of our great country!]

A north korean official praised as North Korea was seen entering, followed by a crowd of applause. On the other doorway, was his human representative entering at the same time as he was. Eventually, meeting at the center.

"안녕하세요, 최고사령관님."

[Greetings to you, Supreme Commander.]

"안녕하세요 김정은님."

[Hello, Kim Jong-Un.]

Even though they were equally in a position that they constantly share. It is without a doubt that North Korea holds the most authority being the Country's manifestation itself and Its Representative in the form of a countryhuman. Therefore, he could address the supreme leader as such without any backlash.

His eyes glanced down at the avarage height of the north korean's supreme leader, being as tall as he was already compared to

humans, He led the march to the central seats to start the meeting immediately as they sat.

"바로 어제 우리 인질 사건에 대해 들었습니다."

[I have heard about the incident of our hostage just yesterday.]

North Korea stayed silent as the human representative of his started talking. He didn't have the energy and motivation to answer any of his questions or even statements and merely focused on the agendas being handed on the congress floor.

" 언제 우리 이익을 위해 그 물건을 사용할 계획입니까?"

[When do you plan to use that thing for our benefit?]

A nerve seemed to show itself of North Korea's forehead as he knew perfectly well what this human was talking about... The human representative of his wants to use Martial to blackmail the South or even Martial's country in exchange for something horrendous.

"나는 그런 계획이 없습니다. 그 인질은 내 것이고 내가 사용할 것이다. 당신은 내 문제에 대해 아무 말도 하지 않습니다."

[I have no such plans. That hostage is mine, and mine to use. You have no say in my matters.]

" 끝없는 기회. 시간이 낭비되었습니다."

[Such endless opportunities. Wasted with time.]

Cool-headed as he could strive to be, North Korea remained unfazed with the words of his human counterpart even if it angered him deep inside.

"그러고보니 유엔이 당신들의 인질에 대해 우리를 상대로 항소장을 제출했다는 사실이 생각나네요."

[That reminds me, The United Nations has submitted an appeal against us about that hostage of yours.]

"무엇에 대한 호소인가요?"

[An appeal of what?]

"남쪽에 있는 한 국가가 그것을 제출했습니다. 꽤 잘못된 움직임이죠?"

[A nation down south has submitted it. Quite a wrong move, hmm?]

With his heart pounding with anxiety at this point, He knew very well who submitted that very appeal to the United Nations. It was Martial's family that was left behind when he rescued the said country from the sea...

An appeal to retrieve Martial was one thing to worry, however, failure to coincide to the appeal may hold long term consequences on him. Yet, he didn't want to let Martial go back, not when he saw his current state.

"항소를 거부하십시오. 우리는 두려워할 것이 없다고 말해주세요. 그들이 찾고 있는 사람은 우리에게 없습니다."

[Refuse the appeal. Tell them we have nothing to fear, We don't have the person they are looking for.]

"그리고 그들이 아직도 그런 일들을 겪고 있다면?"

[And if they are still passing such things?]

"나는 아무것도 지지하지 않을 것이다. 필요하다면 그들이 오게 하세요. 나는 그런 어리석음 때문에 나 자신을 낮추지 않을 것입니다."

[I will not stand for anything. Let them come if need, I will not lower myself for such foolishness.]

"뜻대로 하세요, 최고사령관님."

[As you wish, Supreme Commander.]

Within a few minutes, the meeting concluded without a single opposition to their agreements and disapprovals. It ended without

bloodshed, fortunately.

North Korea could and would leave immediately to check on his so-called hostage, however, due to extra issues within the country, he had to stay behind to process and hear out the officials one by one as they surrounded him all at once, delaying his return back to his chamber where Martial was.

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"Sir, I beg of you. Please, withdraw the appeal to the UN."

Manila begged with Luzon as he dealt with the mountain of paperwork that piled over just a few days, prior to Luzon's temporary ascent to the seat of the Philippine Country Representative.

"And lose my grandson over to that wretched North Korean? I wouldn't leave that up to chance."

He was furious, beyond rage could describe. Luzon was barely informed of the events inside the presidential palace, and now that the appointed country representative had gone missing and was being taken hostage in the asian mainland, no one... No one was stepping up to fix the mess that was flying around.

"Your Grace, I am sure Sir Philip—!"

"Philip? Where is he when he is needed the most? Nowhere! I have given these children enough chances to fix themselves and they never do. If I have to, I will set things back to where it needs to be."

However determined Luzon was, He couldn't possibly handle the consequences of burden of carrying and managing the whole country like his grandchildren, as he was merely but an Island State.

To do what he wants to accomplish, He would need to reach out to his three other siblings. Visayas, or previously known as Panay, Mindanao and Bangsamoro—although the youngest being Bangsamoro, seems more of his nephew due to him being under Mindanao rather than a sibling—to which he lost, rather, cut

contact for intimate reasons, however, kept in touch for professional reasons, due to past interactions didn't end well for all of them.

"I have no choice left. I have to take Martial back, even if it meant pursuading those three again to join my tracks."

"Sir...?"

"Set up an immediate date for a private meeting, I shall meet the three region states to discuss this country's next course of action."

And off Manila goes, He didn't even have a choice in hand at the moment but to follow. Considering, none of his lords present at the palace as of the moment had any power nor authority that could equate to Luzon, that is except for Philip and Martial, which aren't present.

However, if authority and power were out of the question Philia may be able to fill the gap with her political standing, as well as, her remaining power from being a commonwealth back in the old days.

"Manila."

Turning around, Manila was stopped when Del Pilar's voice echoed throughout the corridor.

"Sir Del? How May I help you?"

"Lolo is behind those doors, isn't he?"

The other pointed to the dark doors at the end of the hall to which Manila came from. Indeed was Luzon behind those walls, yet, Del Pilar didn't seem all too delighted with his Grandfather present at the Malacañang Palace.

"Unfortunately, His grace is permitted to handle country affairs as long as no one was subjected to be the temporary representative. Usually, it was the representative's predecessor, however, Due to Sir Philip's disappearance this morning, Sir Luzon is next in line."

Del Pilar cursed under his breath, turning away to hide his

frustrations from the Capital City. He can't and won't be able to take over, as he was merely once a flag of a battalion regiment, therefore he couldn't rule nor even have an authority equal to any of his siblings nor grandfather.

"Where is Philia?"

"Pardon? I believe she is with the Young Sir..."

By then, Del Pilar didn't say another word and rushed out. His steps getting ahead of him as he ran towards Terror Bill's room within the palace' wing.

"Philia!"

He barged in, Surprising the two people inside. Philia stared in contempt towards the Male barging inside the room all of a sudden without any warning. Bill, slightly frightened, hid inside the embrace of Philia as they were previously having a small snack time within the room.

"Mind your manners, Del. You are in front of a child, Act your age for once."

Though Del Pilar wanted to shoot or even rant back at the Female, Once again he remembered that doing so Infront of a child would be insolent and cruel to have the boy experience such a thing, especially from their paternal uncle.

"Well, I'm sorry but I need to talk to you."

"My, this is the first from you."

"Please. Let's talk in another room."

Suspicious at most, Philia started to obliged as she reassured the young boy in her embrace that she would be back soon enough after talking to Del Pilar as she followed him in another room after.

"Do be quick, I promised that young boy a trip around the National Library in the afternoon."

"It's about Grandfather. He's going to drive this country to bits, if he is not stopped in time."

"To bits? And Philip? He has most authority over Grandfather, where is he?"

Del Pilar's sigh could be heard echoing inside the room as he sat down on the couch after setting up refreshments and the tea that Philia enjoys for her morning drink.

"Philip is nowhere to be found. Its been a total of 6 hours now that he disappeared, just leaving a note that he would be visiting somewhere along with Terror Bill's twin."

"Are you quite sure that the note was from him or you just brushed it off as he was kidnapped? For sure, It is quite strange for Philip to take a trip out of nowhere with Kuya's daughter?"

Again, a deep sigh was heard from the male. This was the only thing he could do to suppress his boiling anger at Philia's attitude towards him at that moment.

"What is it about Grandfather? You seem worried, considering he saved us after world war 2, your expression is unruly for a grandson."

"I overheard his conversation with Manila earlier. He plans to talk the other region states to join him and possibly bring back Martial from the Korean Peninsula."

"Great then. Anything to bring back Martial here. Anything more to talk about?"

Disappointment filled Del Pilar's head, as he couldn't bear the other's naiveness in the current issue at hand.

"Without a country representative, This country's power balance will become unstable to the point that we'll be going back to post world war. Lolo simply doesn't fill the bill this time, the gap in power is too large that It will cause the country to shake on its core. Us."

"Your point is?"

"Lolo is willing to appeal to the UN in order to catch and bring back Martial back from North Korea. Going as far as waging a war we cannot afford to wage."

This put Philia into deep thought. Del Pilar questions how the female was able to be one of the best female politicians of her time and is currently is one, and a feared one at that with a slow and naive brain?

"So, You're coming to me to stop this ordeal from happening, because?"

"You're the only one I know who has previously handled the country, and is the only one qualified to step up as the temporary head than grandfather."

Raising an eyebrow, Philia was convinced that this wasn't at all Del Pilar, as knowing him for so long caused her to have a opposite image towards the male.

"There must be a price behind this, if you are asking for my help. The very same person you have loathed ever since I supported Kuya's reign years back, and for whatever reason you hold against me."

"I wouldn't have come to you if Philip would just reply to my messages or calls. But as of the urgent matter, He hasn't."

Pausing for a while, the two distant siblings thought deeply about their next words, whether to be rejected or accepted, it was a truly large obstacle for the two who barely talked outside of conflict and fights.

"Fine. You sound desperate, So I'll help you. But this doesn't mean I'll forget our conflict, Yes?"

"I never said to forget anything. Just think of this as a temporary ceasefire."

"Very well. It is a deal then."

Attempting to shake hands, Philia swayed her hand away after a few seconds of touch to the other, quickly heading to the door and addressing the slightly opened oak doors to the room.

"You heard all of that? I'm sorry, Dear. It looks like I won't be able to take you to the National Library anytime soon."

Terror Bill was peeking through the gap of the doors, listening in on their conversations, only acting surprised as Philia opened the door for him.

"It's quite alright, Aunt! I know you're going to be busy with Papa gone... I don't really mind!"

Del Pilar was taken aback by the boy's statement. How can a child like him be calm and understanding despite his current age? If anything He expected the boy to throw a tantrum, however, it came out the opposite of what he wanted to see.

"I'm sorry really. We'll reschedule when I have the free time needed to take you."

"It's fine really! Handling the country is more important than going to see some books. Please don't pay me any more mind!"

Bill assured them with a smile before quickly retreating his room near the end of the hallway. Philia stared as she watched the boy go back to his room in a hurry.

"That child-"

"Pay him no mind. He is under my wing, with his sister, until Kuya returns. If you are to touch even a single strand of that boy's hair, I will not hesitate to cut you down."

A sharp glare passed by Philia's eyes as she stared in contempt towards the male. Both leading them to their grandfather's current office, the presidential's.

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Just below the opened scattered letters of the three siblings

addressed to Martial in the past, a secret compartment was opened and a small opened box laid there, as Philip sobbed beside it all.

Emotions of different kinds came flowing in, reading each content of each letter. Each reassurance, sadness, happiness, madness, and fear of each word inside each letter, felt as if this room was a place stuck in time with how preserve its emotions contained by time.

Upon finishing the last letter in his hand, a letter to which came from him back in the early 1900's, he stared into the ceiling, fixing his thoughts and rampaging emotions inside his chest and mind...

"Why didn't you say anything... No. Why didn't we do anything? We could've just fixed things if... If we talked it all out. But why? Why didn't we, to escalate this far!"

He shouted in frustration. Philip already understood that they were just living under the gist that every single one of them hated the other to favor another, turns out it was quite the opposite and they had really been looking out for each other, until something behind the scenes pulled the strings and broke them apart for good.

He realized too late... However, he blamed himself for not even trying to mend their relationship. Just a slight thought of mending passed through his mind once and it never came again once he had ignored it for his own gain.

He banged his fist of the ground, whilst sitting down and once again he was in another room. However in this one was an endless white room with the ceiling roamed of different aura of colours.

"My, I didn't expect you to be here."

A woman of excellent aura of grace and majesty was seen standing infront of him. Clothes of unfamiliar trait yet so similar to those he had seen with tribal people of his country, Hair of silver that was a uncommon trait to anyone and eyes of dark color. Who was this woman?

"I suppose reading those letters sent you here to me."

"What? Who...?"

"I'll get straight to the point. I have been protecting you three siblings since I know, With your brother not fulfilling his end of the deal, I am stuck in dealing on how to pass away finally."

Confused, Philip took a step back as he listened to this woman's rant. Though he couldn't understand half her words due to her thick accent, he somehow caught some notable words like; Protect, Deal, Pass Away.

"What is that?"

The woman suddenly pointed to his side, just noticing that the journal was sent along with him inside this room to which had no walls.

"Uhm, This is... Martial—My elder brother's journal."

"Martial's journal, you say?"

The lady kept an amount of distance between them since earlier, however, now she strated to stride towards him, barefoot as he could tell from her uncovered feet.

"Give it to me, Child of Katipunan."

Speechless, To be called that way was neither respectful nor disrespectful, however, it seemed to cause a sense of protecting once self due to the tone of danger coming from her.

"Why would I give this to someone I barely know and barely met?"

Philip tightly held the journal and gotten defensive, ready to strike with his country spirit if needed.

"Ah, I seem to have gotten ahead of myself."

The woman then started to fix herself and conducted her introduction in a proper way in the manner of which was convincing that she meant no harm to Philip.

"My name Is Maharlika. One of the first settlements in this land, as well as one of its 'founders'. I was worshipped by your mother's

ancestors as a God, And indeed I am a deity of their line... One of the last, alongside Ophir, Your Father's bloodline."

"A god? Is there such a thing? And Ophir? Isn't that just a myth?"

"Unfortunately, We exist. And will soon fade away once we loose our worshippers."

"Then, how are you alive when my country isn't as pagan as then any longer?"

It was logical and understandable question from Philip. Especially, times had already changed and pagan Gods like them are bound to disappear within time eventually, but, why haven't she and the other god faded away yet?

Suddenly, the room was no longer white and a forest was all around. Philip was shocked to see the quick changes around that he didn't notice that the female disappeared.

"Watch closely onto why."

He heard the female's voice, however couldn't see her anywhere from where he remember she was standing before.

"What do you mean?"

Swiftly, a boy around the age of Terrie bolted near him, making him sway backwards, catching himself before he dropped to the ground.

"What the—Martial...?"

A young boy, holding his left arm tightly as he looked back from where he came from, worried and frightened. Bruised and soaked in blood, this boy ran into the forest despite his large injuries around his body.

"Wait! Martial!"

Indeed, it was Martial, however his young self was running away from something that frightened him. Philip followed the young one

to a cave as his pursuits went away in a wrong direction as he hid, hissing with the pain as he quietly entered the cave.

He quickly wanted to help his young brother, however, once his hands touched the other's shoulder to get their attention, hisnhand passed through them as if they were non existent.

"What...?"

Philip muttered under his breath, as he continued to watch from afar as he stare at the boy enter the dark cave by himself.

Finally after a moment of a few minutes, The young Martial came lookimg out the cave. Anxiety covered his face as he went back in and whispered some words, soon coming out with guiding two children.

"That's—"

"Felipe... Makinig ka sa'kin ng mabuti. Pumunta ka sa bayan na malapit dito, sa may eskinita katabi ng simbahan, makikita mo ang isang lalaki na may suot na salakot na may pulang bulaklak. Sabihin mo ang aking pangalan at aalagaan nila kayo. Naintindihan mo?"

[Philip... Listen carefully. Go into town that is near here, in the allyway beside the church, you'll see a man wearing a *salakot* with a red flower. Just say my name and he'll take care of you. Do you understand?]

"Paano ka, Kuya? Wala na si Inay at nasa kamay na ng mga Espanyol si Itay—"

[How about you, Brother? Mother is dead and Father is in the hands of the Spanish—]

"Huwag mo ako alalahanin, Felipe. Pagkatapos mo sumama sa lalaking naka-salakot, makikita mo ang iyong Kuya Del Pilar. Sí? Susunod ako sa madaling panahon."

[Do not worry about me, Philip. After you go with the man wearing the *salakot* , you'll soon see your other brother Del

Pilar. Yes? I'll follow soon.]

Philip saw how the expression of his young brother was not what he could vaguely remember, that was reassuring and brave, rather fear and uncertainty filled the boy's face, barely giving the two children a reassuring smile of safety.

"Aalagaan mo si Felia. Ikaw lamang ang kaniyang pinagkakatiwalaan ngayon, Ikaw muna ang Kuya ngayon, Felipe."

[Take care of Philia. You are the only one she can trust now, You're the big brother for now, Philip."

"Susunod ka Kuya? Pangako mo iyan."

[You'll follow right? Promise?]

The young Martial seemed to hesitate as he locked teh pinky promise between them.

"Pangako."

[Promise]

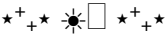
Liar... You never came back, you turned your back on us and went to the Spanish!, Philip thought deeply, sorrow, guilt and anger boiling within as he kept watching the scene beholding infront of him.

The two kids, badly dyed their haired and painted their skins brown to somehow pass as a human. Being children and all, all they knew was they were going to visit a relatives' home and stay there for a while until their brother comes and takes them.

However, those were merely the imagination of children. The truth was far from it.

[To Be Continued....]

16. The Secluded Past



Frightened and bewildered, Del Pilar once stood at the crossroad of said emotions...

A field of smoke and blood, lifeless bodies piled each and every corner, a number injured and most retreated for the few to be examined and treated. Most died out of helplessness, calling out their loved ones as their breaths lasted and cut out.

There he was—gun in hand—he couldn't fire as any rounds ran out as he had anticipated before running into this hell called war. Del Pilar's men stood afar behind the backs of those who responded to their plea of reinforcements...

The silhouette of death stood afront the soldiers. His uniform stained with the blood of his enemies. A bayonet on his hand soaked with the lives of many, evident from the red that colored its blade. His crimson hair sent a warning to those who opposed them, yet his wings... Black as the night, sent a warrant to face death's door immediately.

It was not as though he was scared of anything such as that, but, It was the other's smile. *He* smiled as he watched the enemy soldiers ran in fear and trip to only have their throats slit on the spot by his hand.

Del Pilar didn't knew who that was personally. Rumours would circulate, but never that person's name.. All he knew was fear and obedience, if he were to encounter *him* again. But never again did he see that general again.

General? Was he a general?, His thoughts scrambled to think clearly. Fear possibly distorted Del Pilar's mind as he thought of the past, yet, something didn't felt right as he remember that day's events... As if, he, himself tried to erase something of his.

"ya- Pakiusap! Hindi nito maibabalik si Itay!"

[er— Please! This won't bring back Itay!]

Jumping. Jolting awake as he looked around the place he was currently in. His heartbeat sped up rapidly as his breathing was uneven with him gasping for air.

What was that? A dream? A memory?, He thought, clearly feeling that pain and sorrow through that one line that came out of his very mouth. Yet, he doesn't remember saying that... Not once.

It was quiet, unusually quiet. As though purposely done. He was certain that earlier, before blacking out, he had been in the urgent meeting to reinstate Philia as country representative, even if it was against their grandfather's stand, however, in favor of their grand aunt and uncles.

He walked through the halls, the empty and familiar halls of the Malacanang Palace... *Wait, How did I get here? Wasn't I just...?*

"Del."

A voice. A woman's voice came so suddenly that he had almost flinched in sight of her. It was her. The woman from weeks, maybe months or even years earlier, that he had seen in a dream before.

The one that called him her "blood".

"Its you. Did you bring me here?"

"Del, have you thought of wondering why you're different from others?"

This question again... This is the second time she asked directly. Still he couldn't understand what purpose it brought the other nor to him. He knew from an early age that he didn't inherit the gold eyes of his father, however, inherited the genes of his mother's ancestors...

Her face seemed sorrowful. Del Pilar had just noticed that she wasn't wearing the same clothes he had saw her last on... their mirror encounter.

Her clothes now seemed ripped, bloodied and out of style. She had her hair out, reaching for the ground, rather than having it fixed with gold and a veil covering it. Silk like hair fell to the ground and brushed like it was water.

"I have... What does it have to do with anything?"

Looking down to the ground, his tone may not be compassionate nor soft, but he knew it was low and more of a whisper to the distance they had from each other.

"Come, my child."

He already figured this was a dream as the scenery changed from the hallway to the light scarred fog entering their way. *She* already had a lamp on her hand, a candle burning inside, lighting their way in...

"Where are we going?"

She didn't answer. Her silence beholding the way as they walked through this misty place. He could hear voices come by and disappear, children's shadows casted and blew away, yet, none was explainable.

"My child. Child of the land. Servant and Protector of the Final Sun, Del Pilar."

Servant and Protector? Final sun? , Del Pilar's thoughts ran amok, not noticing the scenery changing around him and as he loose sight of the only female ancestor that he followed through.

"Where are we? Why have you taken me here?"

Still, no response to any of his questions. Del Pilar felt the need to stop in his tracks for confirmation that he wasn't being taken into somewhere that could potentially kill him.

That didn't stop the female on walking forwards that her steps got a bit more fast, that He had to catch up by running at that point.

"Such is the fate of your brothers. If not for your accursed eldest, You

wouldn't have to live this way."

"What are you talking about? Cursed? And What is this about Martial?"

Del Pilar still couldn't understand anything that the female wanted to imply and make him understand. Nothing made sense.

"An Unfulfilled deal. You, who received my power, lived. While he, who dared shook my hand in exchange for cooperation is now slowly decaying."

"Can you not speak in riddles and—!"

"You, the son of Perla!"

The woman spinned and faced towards him. Her silver hair flowing with the non-existent wind going east, barely showing her face but one of her empty eyes.

"Save him. Save Martial. Free him from the shackles that bind him."

Del Pilar stood paralysed. *What did she mean save him? Shackles?* It was evident at first that many thought that Martial died, but why is this ancient diety saying to save the one he despises?

"Watch the sky. On the day where the moon passes the sun, will be the chosen day of his demise. Stop him from gaining control. Kill him!"

As a screeching sound alarmed through the non existing walls, Del Pilar held his ears close as to lessen the impact of the sound waves. Voices of unfamiliar kind kept whispering, as if he was recalling memories that he wasn't supposed to know...

"What is this?! What have you done to me?!"

"Philip. He must take back the authority of representative. I trust you, Del Pilar."

The visage of the woman started becoming quite a blur, seemingly fading away. However, within a single moment, Del Pilar spotted a glitch, a swift change in appearance—a mascular build, golden

strands of hair, precious white silk covering their body, and a large black rift swallowing the other's arm—That was when Del Pilar knew... This wasn't the same deity he spoke to a few years back.

Winds blew vigorously from all sides like the eye of the storm was near him and was intentionally blowing him away. And just like that Del Pilar was in the empty halls of the Malacanang Palace once again to contemplate in doing what he was told to against what he wishes to do at the dire moment.

"Del."

Startling awake, He realized he was standing in the middle of the hallway like in his vision earlier, however, contrary to earlier where everything was eerily quiet and somehow foggy, more light was now coming through the windows and everything was clear to the eyes of his.

"You've been standing there for a while now. Are you alright?"

It didn't take for him to turn around to recognize the to which called out to him.

"Aunt Vi... You're here?"

Visayas, One of the Island region states of the Philippines as well as their grandfather's only sister, stood behind Del Pilar in all her glory. Fortunately, she was nearby the capital city for some official business that she was able to physically attend the emergency meeting arranged by Luzon himself, unlike her two other brothers down south that were still being held in restriction with quarantine.

"Of course. I can't let my wretched older brother run a country that wasn't meant for him."

"You shouldn't—"

"So? Let them hear what I have to say. Considering that sad excuse of a man wants to reinstate himself as country representative, everyone should just drop dead if he gets approved. That is why, Good Job on pursuading Philia to go against Luzon."

Del Pilar didn't know what to say next. Should he thank his great aunt? Apologize for not consulting them? Get angry because someone who supports Martial is getting reinstated? He just didn't know.

"Walk with me, Dearest Del."

Visayas brushed pass Del Pilar, as the male scurry to match the female's pace of walking.

"I heard about Martial's hostage issue and that Luzon passed an appeal to the UN for his retrieval."

He couldn't see his Great Aunt's face but Del Pilar could feel the disappointment radiating from her aura as she walked by. Her hands clenched behind her back as she walked in the hallways of the Palace.

"Do not let him return."

"What?"

They both stopped in their tracks. The male surprised as he wasn't particularly close with the female, but hearing that Visayas didn't want Martial Law back must mean that she is like them. Like him and Philip that actively is against Martial Law.

"It's not because we are against him or his ideals. Yes, we are, however, staying outside the country may only be the right thing for that child."

"I don't understand? Why?"

His Great Aunt looked at him dead in the eyes. Seriousness covered her whole face as she frowned at her own decision at that moment.

"As much as his methods were quite effective for this country. His own state of the matter isn't something this country needs or can handle as of the moment."

Its not like he could deny nor fight against his Great Aunt's claim. He doesn't even know why he was indirectly defending Martial Law

in this matter, but whatever the reason is, the eldest sibling was already a part of the system of the country.

The silence beholded them both. No one wanted to speak any more as much as they wanted to argue or even fight the other, they needed to accept the fact that the one that they were protecting right now was their united enemy at hand.

"As much as I wanted Martial to be exiled back then. I rather him to pass not in this land nor anywhere near here."

Pass? Does she want Martial to die outside the country? Does she know? Does she know that Martial is going to die...? Such thoughts scrambled itself inside Del Pilar's mind as he recollected every single moment he was spending his life at that time.

"But without Martial, this country may—"

"I know that very well, Del. However, bringing him back here will bring this country down at a faster rate. Especially, after that reckless stunt he made in the 1800's."

Visayas seemingly turned away from Del Pilar. Her face away from the male but looking far into the distance, as if rememberimg something burried deep into her mind.

"What are you talking about? A stunt? Who, Martial?"

"That boy may seem calm and collected. But deep down, we, state islands knew the price he had to pay to save you all."

This confused him even more. A price? A reckless stunt of Martial from the past? What did he or even his pther siblings have to do with such information?

"He hasn't told you, has he? My brother, that is?"

"No...?"

The female sighed as she took the liberty to be the one to share the information that was hidden from the siblings, especially from their own grandfather. She readied herself, looking pitifully at the male

for having such information away from them.

"Martial... Sold his soul to the ancient deity Ophir and offered an exchange with the deity Maharlika."

The silence that followed was loud and deafening. None wished another word to be spoken between them as the realization sank within.

"What? You have to making this up. Making a deal with myth deities? Are you making me a fool right now?"

"Believe what you want, Del Pilar. Luzon broke away from us, just because he wanted Martial alive at all cost, and even by that wish, he trapped his own grandson in an endless amount of pain."

Luzon? Grandfather? His own blood relative wished for Martial to be alive despite that? Del Pilar couldn't comprehend what to believe at that moment. He was lost, confused even, who to even trust with the right information.

"Is that true?"

Turning around, Philia was standing there, her hands clenched inside her sleeves. Her expression was made out of different mixed emotions, Anyone could see her trembling as she fought to fight back her tears from falling.

"Dear—"

"Tell me the truth, Aunt. What did Grandfather do to Martial?"

Visayas worriedly looked upon her only niece and Del Pilar after. She then walked close to Philia and gently pushed her closer.

"We can't talk here. Let's talk in another room."

"You better explain everything! Otherwise, I will make sure that you spill everything until you no longer know anything."

"I know."

The female island state quickly took the two of them into a nearby room, and shared what she knew and only she knew at that moment, even if the two sibling had questions she couldn't answer.

They walked down the hallway, silence englufing them all as they entered a secluded chamber. No servants, gaurds, nor lies... It was just them and the hidden truth now at hand. Closing the door behind her, Visayas let out a breathless sigh, as she went her way to a chair facing the two.

"Where do I start to explain to you the complexities of this situation..?"

"Start from the beginning."

Philia told bluntly, as if her patience was wearing thin with each hesitation her Aunt drew from herself and from the real truth. With a breath of sigh once more Visayas started gathering her strength before she spoke;

"Alright, Let's start at the beginning. The prophecy that started this all."

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Looking out the window, He watched as the soldiers below follow a strict line of commands from their superiors. Martial contemplated about his own *'sickness'* at hand and how it was taking a part of him every hour, compared to how healthy and freely some could go without worrying about some damned curse.

North Korea had let him stay at his own private chamber, under the orders of house arrest, but really he could see that North Korea ordered such a thing to stop him from even attempting to take his own life in the process. Martial can't even understand if the korean is worried about him or just wants him to play hostage for a while.

Snow was starting to fall, as it revealed itself through the frosting of the window. He looked up beyond the window pane, watching as the tiny orbs of winter start to fall down to the ground.

"Martial."

The quick and amounted strides quickly closed the gap between them, North Korea held an old trench coat of his that he once wore back then and quickly tossed it to Martial, who caught it, bending as he tried not to let it fall from his arm that caught it.

"Wear it. You've probably never experienced winter for a long time."

"Thank you, North."

"Wear it quick, so that I don't have to call a medic again when you collapse because of hypothermia."

A light laugh came from Martial as he tried the coat on, a little worn around yhe edges but fitted perfectly on his stature. Surprisingly, considering that Martial and North isn't really that type to be of the same size of clothing, and yet this fit perfectly around him.

"It fits?"

"Of course it fits. I'm not that much of a tyrant to let my hostage die of a cold."

"Thank you, again..."

He just nodded on agreement ans straightened his own coat around his shoulders. Martial watched as North Korea straightened himself in the mirror nearby, a simple gesture and yet it made his chest pound with an ache he seemed to forget long ago.

"I used to be like that."

Martial started, his eyes slowly returning to the window.

"Collected and a perfectionist. Thinking that I could fix everything if I had the power and authority to do so... I was wrong. Boy, I was."

North Korea said nothing, watching Martial law from the reflection of the mirror.

"You know, I made a deal once and never once I had fulfilled my end of that agreement and now it is eating me alive."

A smile? Martial was smiling and yet North Korea didn't seem enlightened by that fact. He knew of the consequences of having made a deal, being one that also made a deal with his own, but the fact that knowing the excruciating effect of not having to do your side of the deal.

And now considering the cracks and power of Martial that seemed to be imploding inside of him, it's too much overdue that it was taking his life in the process, but the pain... The pain must be unimaginable.

But, Martial... He wasn't showing anything. Was he numb already?

"For how long?"

North Korea finally spoke, his eyes not leaving Martial Law from the mirror.

"I'm not sure. It had been so long that I have forgotten what I was supposed to do to repay that deal."

"Don't you feel pain? It must be unimaginable considering that it's been so long."

Finally, Martial looked his way, his eyes emptied of anything seeking for sympathy or pity, just the certainty that he had already accepted long ago.

"No matter what I did. This curse wouldn't let me die without a consequence, and so here I am."

North Korea, then, turned, fully facing the Filipino and walked towards him, not hurried but not slow, he stood right infront of him, looking down with weary eyes.

"Why would you?"

"Would I what?"

"Die? Are you out of your goddamn mind? if you think I'm going to let you die under my hands, then you're mistaken."

Martial slowly looked up to him, his eyes catching the other's in that moment. He didn't know at first, but his lips slowly curved into a faint smile.

"I was hoping you would..."

[To Be Continued...]

17. The Overdue Payment

Philip stood at the piles and piles of opened letters; His sobbing have already ceased earlier, as he accepted the fact that his brother loved in a way that was painful and selfish. He was angry for a fact, but also enlightened enough to understand that both of them misunderstood the other.

Collecting what he could gather in his arms, he weakly stood on his two feet, trying to carry everything out the room. He knew now, he let himself be blinded of the fact that he wasn't the only one that carry such pain... And that regardless of any reason, they were still brothers.

"I have to go back... God knows what is happening in Malacañang right now."

A chuckle managed to seep its way from his throat, despite the ache of it from his earlier cry.

"Uncle, Are you done?"

From the doorway, Terrie peeked through the small crack. Her small form barely showing itself from the doorway. He now knew that this child, at least one of them, kept his brother grounded and alive when his own siblings couldn't. And for that he was thankful.

"Yes, my dear. Where is CPP?"

"He's downstairs. We gathered everything that needed to be gathered... Is there something you want to see?"

This child, Terrie, could already tell that he was still in search of something. The reason-*the main reason*-on why Martial had to strike that deal in the first place, anf why he had to drag it to this point of no return.

"I just have a question. You don't have to answer if you don't know the answer."

Terrie stared at him, innocently wide eyed, expecting the question from Philip, as if she could answer it with the innocence that reflected her eyes.

"Do you-*Are you*...happy with your father? With Martial? Despite his condition?"

There was a pause from Terrie. Although she knew the answer, being asked of it precisely made her think. Not in a way that a normal child should think, but as the child who was raised by someone that was mentally and physically unable to even reaise a child in his condition.

"Papa did everything he could to raise us. Even if it was painful to even carry through life, he still stayed long enough to give us the life he couldn't have himself."

Philip knew that at such a young age, their family was robbed of the normal things a normal family should have. But seeing this child-this girl-be grateful for the fact that her own father raised her normally, made his heart ache in joy.

"What about you, Uncle? Are you angry that Papa hid all of this?"

"Why would I be angry?"

"He did bad things to you in the past, thinking it was for the greater good. But it ended up hurting you and now you see that he couldn't control it. Wouldn't that make you angry?"

If he was being honest, he should be angry... And yet, he was strangely not. He couldn't understand it himself. Martial declared martial law to supress him and his rule, took advantage of the country and killed thousands, and yet, he couldn't control it?

What bullshit was this...?

If his "curse" was truly taking control of his body, then... What did he do to make it that way?

"I don't know, little one. I suppose I've dragged my anger far longer that I've exhausted myself from being so."

The girl didn't push any further and just lowered her head, understanding that this was beyond her understanding. Before they could exit the room formally, Philip's phone buzzed; an incoming call.

"There's signal here?"

He answered it without much thought as Manila's voice came through in a panic;

[Sir? Philip! Thank goodness I've got a hold of you!]

"Why? Is something wrong?"

[It's Bill. Martial's youngest.]

Suddenly, it was as if the world shifted just below his shoes. His chest immediately twisted with worry as he tried to keeo himself calm, knowing that if shows any signs of panic right now, it wiuld immediately alert Terrie, which is a terrible idea considering this is her twin brother that they were talking about.

"Tell me, what's happening?"

[He suddenly collapsed in the hallway, claiming he couldn't breathe. When I got him examined by the Palace's doctor, he started vomiting blood.]

"What did the doctor say? Anything? Is it related to COVID? He might be one of the critical ones—"

[No! This is worse, Philip—Bill? Bill, look at me! Stay awake for me, alright?]

There was evidence of panicking over the phone, by how much Manila was tryinh to get somewhere, his movements clearly captured by the audio being broadcasted to Philip.

[You have to get home now, Philip. I don't know where you are or what

you are doing—Philia and Del is nowhere and this boy needs someone, a countryhuman and not a capital!]

That's when the call ended abruptly. Philip had no time to waste nor delay, his nephew and Terrie's twin brother was in danger and they had to get back before it worsens

"Terrie... Get CPP now. We're going back to the Palace."

"Hmm? is something wrong?"

He couldn't speak, not to this child infront of him of what was happening, or what was supposedly happening to her twin brother. There was no confidence in him to watch this little girl crumble with worry, especially now when she has no one but her brother.

"It's just an emergency back in the palace. Go now, call CPP."

Terrie just nodded obediently and swiftly made her way downstairs to call upon CPP, not a single hint of what was happening to Bill and within the palace. It was dire-Philip knew it was a dire situation-and yet he couldn't show any hint of uncertainty infront of someone affected, especially to a child.

Within just a few minutes, Philip had gathered some of the things; letters, small tringkets, a key that Martial seemed to have left for him, before CPP barged into the room after Terrie asked for him to go to Philip.

"Philip?"

"Its worse than you thought. Martial's power was supressed to the point that it acts on its own, to the point of eating away its possessor."

He had found letters addressed to Philia and Del also, he carefully placed them within his pockets, before facing CPP himself.

"Tell me. Why is it also reacting to Bill? and how is it related to them?"

CPP couldn't speak for a few seconds. He had nothing to hide the

moment he bought Philip to that villa, yet he hesitated before speaking;

"The twins are kept alive by Martial's power, if you want specifics, he transferred two parts of his country fragments to the two when he found them in the alley where he took them in."

A country fragment? Philip's thoughts scrambled for information and instantly it hit him. If countryhumans could make deals with humans and that would boost their power within the country itself; A country fragment is much more precious to a countryhumans than anything.

If to be summarized, it can be classified as one's very essence of existence. A heart in other terms, soul in another.

One fragment is already quite dangerous to be separated from the whole. The moment a countryhuman dies, its fragments are scattered throughout the whole country as a way of keeping the balance of power and life.

"Martial... doesn't have his original fragment. It had long deteriorate when you pushed and exiled him."

"What? Then how!? How is he alive all this time?"

Panic and fear swirled around Philip's head, his movement grew frantic as he stepped closer to CPP, who stood by the door.

"He had been collecting fragments of others and forcing it into his system. He isn't aware of this because..."

"Because?"

"Ophir... takes control of his body and makes him stay alive."

For a heartbeat, it seemed like the world had stopped. Ophir? the very one that he looked up to as his ancestor? The one he thought was the very essence of why his country was existing, was making his brother-Martial, live his hell through years of pain? Why?

Why?

Why would he do that?

So... Does that mean timely...

Martial is supposed to be dead? He knew that clearly. Philip had already drawn up to that conclusion long ago and yet... it was still much to process.

"What was the deal, really...?"

CPP hesitated, he could clearly see Philip trembling behind his eyes. The worry, anger and ache, all swriling behind his golden eyes, as if telling him to lie to him at least, soften the blow and yet there wasn't any comfort in the truth.

"Martial promised Ophir his soul in exchanged for your and the others protection. Then, came with the deity Maharlika, he also closed a deal with her to gain the power to live for more years, after his deal with Ophir was going haywire, in exchange that he would keep Del Pilar alive."

"Del? What does Del have to do with this?"

"Martial, You and Philia are direct lines of the Ophirian blood. That's why you are always targeted by colonizers! Del Pilar is the opposite-he comes from the direct line of free men. Your mother's line is from Maharlika herself!"

"What the f*ck does bloodline got to do with this?! Martial is being held hostage elsewhere and this bullsh*t started because of blood? Give me a break."

By this point, Philip was grabbing CPP by the collar. His knuckles close to the other's throat that it was giving him a hard time to swallow or breathe.

"Spanish-Spanish Empire sold you to the US because of that blood!."

"What?"

"Martial was supposed to stay with him after he sold you off to the Americas, Philia was to follow after he sells her to another country

in exchange for power. It never happened because Martial let you escape, in exchange of his power used against his will."

"No. I was sold regardless. My children-they were my only family left after my damned one let me be enslaved to another country! My own family-sold my children to the US when I was still enslaved to the Spanish! and now I have to tend to the child that I don't even know if I can still forgive after knowing that fact!"

"Martial didn't sold your f*cking children! It's your damned colonizers that collided with each other to divide you siblings."

"No... No that can't be true-It was Philia. Philia clearly told me through letter she'll take care of my children and then she sold them to the US for... protection..."

Philip's hands trembled, his grip on CPP's collar weakened as his eyes started darting around, his mind lookng for the memory of the past that he clearly remembers having. He couldn't find it... more like, he couldn't recall it-because it didn't exist.

CPP then grabbed hold of Philip's shoulders, making him snap back to reality;

"Listen to me, Philip. Whatever it is, Bill is our priority now, I don't know what happened in the past but I know you can still fix it. We have to go."

"Bill...? Yes, Bill..."

Thoughts swirled around Philip's head, he couldn't tell anymore what he was doing at that current time. His head was in a daze, lightheaded perhaps. All he knew next was that he was sitting in the passenger seat of the car they came with, passing through checkpoints set up by the pandemic.

"Philip... I know it's too much to process right now. I know you have a lot of questions in mind, I'm sorry I can't give you the answers you want right now. But what I know is that we have all been fooled once."

Philip didn't speak, or rather he didn't know what to respond to

CPP's worlds; Not because he was troubled on replying, but because he was questioning both himself and the faith and knowledge he carried throughout the years, thinking that his hatred towards his own brother and sister may have also been a catalyst towards Martial's impending death.

◤□□□□□□□□□□□◥

"Then why? Why do you hurt yourself? Why are you trying to decide your end when you know it won't let you die?"

North Korea was now kneeling in front of him. His head slightly tilted to catch Martial's gaze, it was neither comforting nor weary, it was just there...

"I think... I just wanted to feel that I had control of something, even if it was inevitable."

"Then what are you doing now? Aren't you living because you choose to? You wouldn't be talking to me and saying these things if you wanted nothing from me."

Martial stared at him wide eyed. North Korea was right, if he wanted nothing to do with him, he wouldn't share these things so openly, especially when they were former enemies, still to the present. And yet... *Why?*

Maybe he had grown fond of North Korea during the time he stayed at his own home? after he came with him to Malacañang to reinstate his position? *No... It was much more further back.*

A past that maybe, already decided their fate.

"It seems I got emotional. How weak of me."

He weakly laughed, as if it was a joke that he didn't mean to say. Yet, North took this into account but didn't say anything to further this solemn state of his Filipino hostage.

"Don't beat yourself up. We both know that it isn't your choice to be here in the first place."

North Korea dusted himself as he got up, eyeing the door as he tried to leave, when a small tug of his sleeve stopped him from moving away from his current position.

"Thank you, North."

Martial faintly smiled, looking up at him with those usual tired eyes that North had grown to recognize; even if he wanted to, he wished Martial would just cry, scream even, make a mess of anything, but insted he could just stay still and keep quiet because it wasn't his place to demand these things from someone who is supposedly his enemy and hostage at the current time.

"You should rest, Martial."

"You're right..."

Slowly, the small tug on his sleeve suddenly left. He saw as Martial got up and slowly walked towards the bed. The very bed that he had always slept on and now he had offerd to Martial on being both his prisoner and patient-that he now sleeps in his office with an extra set of blankets.

"Have a good rest, Martial."

"I will. Come back soon, North."

Why... His mind raced and yet he couldn't really get a grip on why Martial said so with such a careless and warm voice towards him. He could clearly see Martial's curse seeping through his neck and arms and could only assume the worse, and that Martial was slowly saying his goodbyes.

He didn't want that. He doesn't *want* that.

There was this unpleasant feeling that he can't shake off. That he can't get rid off no matter how much he tried to reassure himself.

Martial was... A void of assuredness.

"Yeah... I will."

He gave the Filipino a faint smile as he closed the door behind him. The last glimpse of Martial faded as he walked away. It felt like retreating.

He felt like he lost.

That he was losing.

Not really knowing that he was about to really lose something he unknowingly is desperate to keep.

Martial stood up from the covers of the bed as soon as he knew that North Korea had walked away, far enough to not notice what he was going to do.

During his brief time in that imprisoned cell, he managed to get a hold onto how monitoring works around that area. It was strict and precise, yes, and yet he found a loophole. He always did when he was anxious.

Using what little strength he had to control his own fractured power, he secretly managed to keep an eye with these loopholes that he found, and uncovered a perfect timeframe.

A timeframe to finally release himself from his pain.

But he knew he couldn't do it in this country. Not in the North Korean Peninsula. Not when he managed to get North to trust him to let him go to rest alone without monitor.

Not when, he finally found someone who cares enough without asking for anything in return.

"Not yet..."

He whispered. His power flactuating in the snowflakes winding in the room when he opened the window.

"..Not... Yet."

His voice was barely a whisper as it cracked with the shiver of his skin. He felt the cold running deep into his fingertips to the whole

of his hand and it was numbing, and yet it felt right.

What are you doing? A voice echoed inside his head; the voices. Schizophrenia it seems, but it wasn't. He was still in control, this was something else, someone else.

You can easily escape from here! Why are you holding back? Are you scared? You? Who tortured thousands is scared? Pfft! Laughable!

It was a mocking voice. It had always been like that, taunting and persuasive to the poont of bringing up sensitive personal details within their words to have him obey what they wanted.

Child, You do not seriously believe that Maharlika can still save you with that wretched deal of yours?

"The deal stays as long as you're here in my head. Inhabiting my mind like it's yours."

His voice a breath of a whisper. Some there were clearly looking at him like he was mad, insane even to be speaking in a room where no one but him was present.

Inhabiting?! You're mine, Martial! You have always been my perfect descendant! I am your father's forefather. If not for your repulsive moth
—

"Do not bring my mother into this! She has done nothing wrong but birth a being like me. Something that sealed her fate forever..."

That last sentence could barely be heard and could only be mistaken as an unspoken thought at that point, and yet he couldn't deny it outright.

How admirable. A hypocritical son protecting his blameless mother.

"My mother isn't blameless. She made her mistakes and regrets, and she died protecting one of it. Now, that she's not here, I've turned out this way."

Don't beat yourself up, Kid. There's a whole world waiting—

"There won't be a world waiting for me any further. I shall finish this once and for all, even if it meant taking a drastic measure."

Martial looked at himself in the mirror near him. His reflection was something his eyes had been familiar with for years; long disheveled, unkept hair that North had tied himself hours earlier, his skin once the prestine, smooth layered with scars was now tainted with dark cracks. His eyes that once rivaled the color of the sun, now one of it was dark and dull, the other didn't shine as clearly anymore.

He was fading.

And he knew it. Very well.

And that truth will forever be with him.

[To Be Continued...]

18. What I want...

Philip arrived at Malacañang a few hours later. Bypassing quarantine checkpoints with his authority as country representative.

It was efficient but wrong in all the ways it mattered. Especially when he was being driven around by an ex or still current convict.

He arrived exactly as the doctors of the first family was scurrying in hurry into one room-the twins' room. It felt wrong that many of them were entering such a small room that was only structured to be a bed room for children.

He could hear voices, weary and angry at the same time.

"Find out! What are you saying that this cannot be determined?"

It was Philia at first. Her voice carried throughout the hallway like a shrill of terror running through his skin like a cold bucket of water was splashed on him the moment he stepped into that hallway.

He didn't waste time as his feet dragged him-sprinted across the vast hall, stopping instantly at the twins' room. Seeing it surrounded by doctors and servants of the Palace inside, he didn't think twice on passing through the crowded room.

The ones inside parted to give him way the moment their eyes landed and recognized who was passing through.

Inside, was the young Bill in his bed-covered of sheets and beads of sweat running down his face and neck-pain evident from his expression and small whimpers. His hand gripped his shirt, particularly near the part of where is heart was located.

"Bill. It's alright-We're going to figure out what's wrong, alright?

Hang on for me."

Philia was kneeling beside Bill on the side near the window, her hand gripping the child's other hand. Her eyes darted from the examining doctor to Bill within minutes, clearly distressed also with the condition of the kid.

"Ma'am, This isn't something that can be solved by physical examination. We need to take him to a hospital."

"A hospital? At this time?"

Philia's expression rose from weary to angry in a matter of second; She didn't stand up-No, She remained kneeling beside the boy and glared at the doctor.

"There is a pandemic outside and you're asking me to send out my nephew to that war of illnesses? Have you lost your mind?!"

The doctor was taken aback, along with the others within the room. Visayas, who had been present since the beginning of all this, spoke up, her hand resting gently on Philia's shoulder to assure the other female of whatever she was feeling.

"We know that Bill's condition can't be determined with just a physical examination. But is there another way to check without having this child be exposed to the outside, considering that infected rates are surging these days."

"I'm sorry, your excellency. But-"

"No need."

Philip's voice radiated across the room. He didn't look serious nor worried, instaed he glanced around the room and took a quick sigh.

"Everyone out. Philia, Aunt Visayas, and Del, stay. Terrie, inside the room now."

They all hurried to scatter out the room, Terrie barely squeezing in with her small body through the opening of the doors. As soon as the doors were shut close, all 5 of them stood in that room in

silence.

"Bill...?"

Terrie peeked from behind Philip, her voice small and worried for her twin brother. She slowly made her way to her lying twin, placing her hand on the clenched fist of Bill just above his heart.

"Bill... Hurt?"

The other didn't-couldn't answer. The pain was unbearable in the slightest movement he made, that even being touched by others could cause him to groan or whince in pain. The other twin shook her head in fear, tears threatning to fall as they couldn't understand also what was happening with her own twin; there was not one here that she could take comfort.

Their own father wasn't present, fully knowing that he also was suffering from a pain children couldn't understand. Her older brothers and sister wasn't there, as by law they were outlaws and rebels. Uncles? Aunts? she barely knew any of them. Despite having an advance mind, an outstanding mind, she was but merely a child.

"Terrie."

Turning around, she saw Philip reaching out to her his hand extended for the slightest comfort he could bring to the child; something he couldn't do to his own children back when he already lost them to colonization.

There were no words capable of comforting a child that knows she was already losing her only family left.

"Move!"

From the outside, a new voice came invading the space of the room: Luzon. He immediately stop dead in his tracks when his eyes landed on the boy beneath all the covers of the bed infront of him; the pain and helplessness reminded him of many things-one of those was his own.

"What is happening here?-"

"Luzon, can't you see-"

"Why is my own grandson covered in forbidden power!? Who is responsible for this?"

He looked around, clearly furious at something only he could see while the others didn't. To others, Bill was merely a chld writhing in pain in that moment; to him however, Bill was surrounded by this thick, dark presence, circling around his chest. Same as Terrie, and yet all of it was focused on the boy on the bed.

"What are you talking about? Have you finally lost your mind, Luzon?"

Visayas was the first and only one to speak up amongst them. She was bewildered that someone like him was even able to raise his voice near the children-one in pain and the other fearful.

"What is this...? Martial, what have you done?"

Luzon heard nothing from Visayas. Though they didn't really have a stable relationship like in the past, he clearly wasn't ignoring her openly, but rather, his attention was focused on what Bill was clutching; it wasn't his chest, not really, It was something more of a fragment, one that a young countryhuman is expected not to have.

His eyes then turned to Terrie, in the same place, embedded inside her chest and within her heart, was the exact same fragment; almost identical in a sense.

"Luzon? What are you?-"

"Why do the two of you have fragments of Martial's soul?"

His voice came out like a whisper and yet with the room dropping to a quiet that seemed deafening, and yet he was heard by everyone in the room and it dropped to a freezing point type of silence.

"What..."

Luzon's fingertips gently glided over to the clenched fist guarding his heart and suddenly a bright light emitted from it, and from

there seemingly like grabbing something; Luzon's hand held a shard like fragment in his hand. He did the same with Terrie and it was the same result.

With this, Bill seemingly relaxed from the pain he was feeling earlier and breathed a sigh of relief as he drifted of to sleep from the medicine he was given much earlier by the attending physician.

"What is this bullh*t? What crap dug through Martial's skull to willingly give up pieces of himself to these children?"

"Lo-I'm sure he had his reasons. Martial wouldn't do this without any particular reason."

Philia only wanted to ease the tension but it just made things worse. Luzon's current mood wasn't pacified and it turned up a bit more, Philip hid Terrie behind him to avoid seeing this current mood of Luzon.

"Calm down. Martial did whatever he could to keep these children alive, even if he was under a curse."

"A Curse? That tyrant of a being?"

Del Pilar finally spoke up, appearing behind Philip and almost bumping into Terrie, who clutched Philip's shirt from behind.

"Quiet Del."

"Philip?"

"I still don't know whether to understand anything or just let it pass by my head for a while. But right now, Martial is the least of my worries."

Anyone could tell that Philip was going through something and was mentally trying to sort it out inside his mind. And yet, he still made sure that Terrie was still behind his legs—protected in a way.

"Philip..."

"Look. I don't know what the hell Martial was thinking with this

stunt he did for these two. All I know now is that he tried to do what he knew was right at the time, and now he is facing its consequences."

Everyone couldn't find any of the words to retort what Philip had said. This was the first time he had spoken for Martial, even with his unspoken rivalry and hatred for the man.

He glanced around, seeing some had made theor head bow in shame or rather pride but wouldn't rather speak in this matter, especially when he didn't let anyone speak for another second longer. Philip, then, pointed a finger to Bill;

"Let a doctor check on him. Terrie, stay with your brother and with Aunt Visayas. Everyone else, out."

With some scurrying to leave, as per Philip's order, some seemed hesitant to do so but did leave because of Philip watching all of them leave.

"Philip-"

"We'll talk later, Del. Give me some time, please."

Del Pilar had his hand on Philip's shoulder, trying to get the assurance that he wasn't leaving because he was told but because he wanted to. But he still wanted to see Philip if he would explain before leaving; as so Philip did, but not in that moment.

"Philia. Come with me."

He stopped his sister from leaving, being the last one there, he wanted a word with the female. Maybe it was desperation or willingness, but Philia followed him to another room after making sure that their Aunt had the twins handled.

It wasn't far, the room that they occupied, but it was far enough from the eyes and ears of the palace.

"What do you need-"

"Have you ever handled children?"

She was confused. Of course she had handled a child, mutiple ones especially, since she once volunteered during the war ro assist and care for children.

"Is this a joke? I don't have time for this, Philip."

Philia was about to leave, thinking this was another stunt being set up by her brother to trap her here while some other things get stuck in place and be delayed. Truthfully, it was exhausting to think she expected that Philip really wanted to talk to her seriously.

That was where she was stopped.

"Palau, Marshall Islands and Guam... They were children then-"

Philip bit his bottom lip to avoid letting Philia hear his shaking breath. He had his back towards her the whole time, facing the cabinet filled with glass, different alcohol beverages, and packages of tea-a tactic to distract himself from what was swirling in his chest.

"I heard of them. What of it?"

Silence stretched for a while before Philip spoke again.

"They were my children..."

"What?..."

He finally had the strength to turn around and face Phila after a while, and yet his eyes were holding back so many emotions that Philia couldn't help but be surprised along with the feeling of shock from this revelation.

"I was told... No-I was sent a letter back then, written in your handwriting and name, that you had my children and would take care of them while I fight in the war back then..."

"Philip, I-"

"...Then after I got back, my children were sold, taken away from me like animals given away to new owners. I have hated you,

despised you for so long because I didn't know who to blame, didn't know where to turn to because I was weak and-"

"Philip!-Please... Don't say those words."

Philia had already grabbed her brother's face, tears already streaminh down his face as he couldn't contain his emotions any longer. Her thumb circling on his cheek like the way their mother once did to calm them down.

"Breathe, Philip. Breathe. Tell me everything after you calm down."

"N-No. I want to know... Did you really sell them to our colonizers? Tell me, Philia."

Philia was silent for a while, searching Philip's face for any type of hesitation nor expression that he wasn't himself; No, he was fully sober and hurting.

"I wanted children myself, Philip."

"Answer the question, please..."

"No. I would never. Your children or not, those kids were innocent and had no business with the affairs of adults, much more countries. Whether they were your children or not, I would have considered them mine."

Philip finally released the heavy air inside his lungs in a gasp as tears streamed down his face, soaking his cheeks completely and to his collar.

"I'm sorry, Philip."

"No-I should be the one apologizing. I blamed someone who didn't know anything and dragged it on until our relationship strained."

"No. I don't blame you for that. I'm apologizing on behalf of everything I did against you."

Philip looked at her, tears still streaming down his face-still hurting, still accepting-Philia, on the other hand, retracted her hands,

guiding him to the nearest chair to sit and yet she remained standing, her hand entangled in each other infront of her.

"I also blamed you... I thought you hated me because I couldn't do anything right. I was born a female and so had little to no influence to you or our brothers' campaigns nor dreams. So I strived to catch up, I didn't know that I was already stepping on you, metaphorically, I mean."

A quiet chuckle came out of Philia as she continued;

"Years ago, Back when Spanish Empire took us, Martial was tortured and used and I... I was used for a different purpose. Intel, assassination, sometimes even unspeakable things."

She looked down, as if ashamed of remembering such things in her past. A faint smile came out of her lips until it disappeared quickly.

"I saw you; little, confused, and yearning for a love in a place filled with monstrosity. And so I pushed you away... We pushed you away, to atleast save you from the darkness that we were plunged in. But that wasn't really the correct solution, was it?"

"What? So, when I came searching for you during the-"

There was a time that a young Philip came searching for his two siblings during a banquet celebration led by the Spanish Empire. And at that time, Philip had wandered in the gardens just to see his siblings; he was forcibly sent back to his quarters.

"Yes... We saw you. Martial... Didn't want you to see the aftermath of that banquet because half the guests in that hall, never made it out... Alive."

Philip's eyes widened, he knew the implications of what Philia was saying. The Spanish Empire used his siblings to eliminate his own rivals, washing his hands off the blood and cruelty of murder, but in exchange, the innocence and purity of his own family...

"I blamed you, because you were pure. Not a stain in your mind to see the horrors of this world. I blamed you for not understanding of what we kept you away from... I blamed you for just being a

child..."

Philia couldn't hold it in any longer and her eyes welled up with the waterworks. Some already escaping her grasp and falling down her face as she sniffled and fought back.

"And then, I became pregnant. I thought I could finally forget my anger, forgive you for being the victim of this hatred of mine. But then, I saw you with US, intimate, and I ran. Too much of a coward to ask for answers, and I lost my only child-the only hope I was barely holding on to, on the only prayer I had left to forgive myself..."

"Philia..."

"Sometimes, I wonder if God took my child because I was still angry at myself and the world for my childhood, and that I didn't deserve to be a mother to a pure soul like a child. I prayed so hard. But now, I realized that, maybe I just wasn't ready because I still had regrets and guilts that I was carrying."

Tears had already started falling from her eyes, as she sobbed into her hands, and yet she continued talking, despite Philip walking to her side and making her sit instead of himself.

"I'm sorry Philip... If only I had known, I could've saved your kids-"

"No... Either way we couldn't have saved them. We didn't have the power nor authority to counter the decisions of those powerful in the past. I just hoped I could've talked to them, said goodbye, or even assured them that I would find them no matter. And yet, I wasted years blaming everyone that I didn't do anything as their father..."

Both siblings were now crying; Philia still tried to fight the tears but it didn't help that she was seeing Philip cry infront of her also. He knelt infront of her, gently cradling her clenched fists as she sat sobbing for the unspoken feelings they hid for years that had finally been spoken aloud.

"Don't cry, sister. You'll get ugly."

Quite a lazy attempt to lift Philia's spirit.

"Hey! I'm not the only one crying, Idiot!"

A small laugh came from the both them as they both sniffled and sobbed, but alas it was the best attempt to at least elevate their sunken spirits.

"I'll get us some water... We'll end up dehydrated at this point."

"Alright..."

Unbeknownst to them both, Del Pilar had been listening behind the closed doors of that room. Muffled to others but years as a soldier had its perks and advantages. He leaned at the wall near the door, then left before anyone else could notice him there.

He walked in silence, debating whether or not either of them were lying or was it genuine? He had also spent years hating on the same man that ruined their lives: Martial. But what if he had also misunderstood him? What if he was also driven by another factor to hate Martial?

He didn't know anymore.

Del Pilar reached his room in a matter of minutes, he didn't know how he got there considering it was a long way before; and he didn't want to know.

He stood by the doors for a while, head down, his hands fumbling to lock the doors firmly;

"What the f*ck is happening?"

One, Philip went missing, then they're informed that Martial striked some kind of deal, then the twins are found with Martial's sould fragments, and now Philip cleared a misunderstanding between him and Philia...

What about him? He still didn't understand anything. He was still being kept in the dark in all of this.

He was older, he knew he was older and yet he didn't know anything at all. Why was that?

"Del Pilar...?"

"Maharlika. Why is it, hmm? Everyone knows f*cking something. Why am I the only one who doesn't? Am I an untrustworthy person to not know anything? Am I?!"

"You already know everything-"

"Huwag mo nga ako gawing tanga, Maharlika-I know the difference between a fool and an ignorant."

[Don't make me the stupid one, Maharlika....]

The silence stretched for a few minutes that Del Pilar already made a conclusion in his mind. He wasn't that worthy enough to know the truth-*the full truth.*

"What I want is the truth and the whole truth. If no one can give it to me, them I'll find it for myself-"

"Martial is dying..."

Del Pilar stopped in his tracks. He already knew that and yet it still carried some sort of weight to him, something that was holding him back.

"I know that already."

"He made a deal with me, even as his whole being was being torn apart. He thought of you, of all of you. And yet, even now, he still hasn't fulfilled his end of the deal."

"Why is that?"

"He wanted to live more to protect you all from the dangers of this world. And yet, he didn't deduce that he would become one of them."

Del Pilar didn't need to see this person, he already knew he was speaking to no one but a ghost in his mind and yet their words

landed right where it wasn't supposed to be.

And it hurt. Terribly.

"What is this...? Trying to play hero now? After all these years?"

"He only wanted what was best-"

"By sacrificing himself? Did he even considered what we wanted? What *I* wanted? Did he? Or did he just went on and made that deal just to feel good about himself? Did he?"

Silence once again filled the void. Del Pilar could only laugh to himself about this absurdity.

The truth? More like a child's delusion to him. He couldn't mix together the fact that Martial would go that far. It was selfish of him to do so. It was already selfish that no one knew he was alive until he came to claim to spot again and now this was the truth that waited for him?

Hilarious. Truly.

"He made a promise to your mother."

"..."

"Such a young boy, promising a heavy wish from his dying mother, so she could rest easy. Would you have taken his place if you had the chance?"

"What place?"

"Chosing between the two evils. One was sacrificing one to save the dozens, the other is sacrificing the latter for one. Would you have slept well, otherwise?"

Del Pilar couldn't speak. Not that he needed to answer that question and yet the implication was clear and heavy.

"Martial didn't have the luxury of chosing for the greater good. He had to choose for survival, that's why he became who he was-a tyrant, a

dictator, and the enemy of the public. What is good without the evil?"

"... Nothing."

"Exactly. You aren't angry at Martial, child. You are angry at the situation that led you here, but you're chosing to blame someone who was also a victim of the same cause, but survived with what they could..."

"..."

"You have your reasons. Martial also has them, even Philip and Philia. But that doesn't mean you are being kept from the truth."

"Then why...?"

"Sometimes, the truth isn't what we seem. Sometimes, we already know the truth but wished we didn't and delude ourselves into thinking of another truth than accept it fully. That is what makes us countries human."

Del Pilar clenched his fists, tightening it that it hurt as the nails dug into his flesh, so close to making it bleed with the pressure.

"You know far more than you take yourself for, Del Pilar."

He didn't speak, pain seeped through his hands but he didn't care. Biting his lower lip to supress the pain with another type of pain.

"The question is... Would you finally accept what is right infront of you all this time?"

[TO BE CONTINUED...]